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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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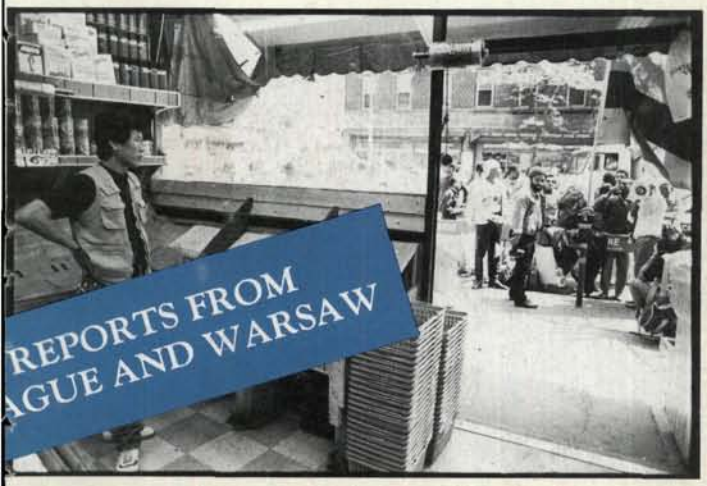

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JULY 2, 1990

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Now they tell us

Apparently America cannot be the world's policeman. Political quarrels in foreign lands are none of our business. Apparently our nation is "on the verge of catastrophic decay" because we've been ignoring the problems of the poor. Major new government initiatives are called for. These are not sentiments culled from the 1972 McGovern campaign or the speeches of Hubert Humphrey. These are "new ideas" being trumpeted by America's triumphant conservatives. To which the proper response is an exasperated, "Now they tell us!"

McGovern said, "Come home, America." Paleocon Patrick Buchanan now writes, "America is coming home." He recommends, as part of a "new nationalism," the withdrawal of all our troops stationed abroad and a general indifference to the fate of foreign nations.

Neocon Irving Kristol confesses that he has achieved that indifference. He resents the pages devoted to international news in *The New York Times*. The struggle between "a Mr. Doe and a Mr. Taylor" in Liberia gives him "a sense of numbness." Ethiopians starve as brutal Marxists duke it out for power, but "one's fund of compassion for suffering peoples all over the world is limited" and "we have no national interest there." Godspeed to the Burmese people struggling for democracy, but Burma has been undemocratic for decades "and the American people seem not to have experienced any trauma as a consequence."

What has changed? The answer, of course, for both Kristol and Buchanan, is the collapse of communism. But this answer raises other questions. What, in retrospect, was the cold war about? Was it only about protecting the physical security of the United States? All that stuff about a crusade for freedom was just a smoke screen? If so, was the gargantuan military effort of the past half-century entirely necessary? After all, we are a continent nation with nuclear weapons. Couldn't Europe and Japan have been defending themselves for years now?

And weren't the liberals unarguably right about, say, Vietnam? The only Americans threatened by the Viet Cong were the ones we sent there. The anti-war argument was that this distant nation's fate was none of our business, or at least beyond our reasonable power to affect. Callous, perhaps, but exactly what Kristol now says about Burma.

On the other hand, if the cold war was about something more, about promoting American values in the world, why has that mission ended with the collapse of communism? Democracy is far from triumphant around the world, but Kristol and Buchanan say we should no longer care. Indeed Buchanan goes further than liberals ever did, attacking what he calls "the Democratist temptation, the worship of democracy" as "a false god." His "new nationalism" is purer than that.

Despite the "come home" rhetoric, liberals were never isolationists. Their objection was not to foreign entanglements per se, but to bloodshed and war. By contrast the new conservative isolationism—really a throwback to pre-World War II conservative isolationism—seems to revel in bloodshed but resent the entanglements. Just when the world seems really ready for some of the gooier aspects of internationalism—global environmental cooperation, free-trade zones, etc.—these guys want to hole up.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Representative Newt Gingrich and Housing Secretary Jack Kemp want conservatives to launch a big new war on poverty. Nothing like the collapse of communism is available to explain this domestic-policy turnaround. It's just that despite Republican control of the White House for eighteen of the past twenty-two years, it seems that the problem has not been licked.

Gingrich's line of bull is heavy on vacuous inspiration: "The essence of the new reform movement's message [is that] applying common sense focused on opportunities and success will lead to a more prosperous America." There is some wonderful malarkey about a triangle with "basic American values" on the bottom and "technological progress" and "entrepreneurial free enterprise" up the sides. But distilled, arduously, to its essence, Gingrich's idea is that private and local government initiatives should replace the federal "bureaucratic state." He, for example, is offering poor third-graders in his district $2 for each book they read this summer.

Kemp's essence is even more elusive. He shares an anti-bureaucratic bias (which is easy enough), but he certainly has no objection to national-level efforts. In a single *Wall Street Journal* article (June 12), he endorsed a new program of housing vouchers, large tax cuts for the working poor, IRAs for first-time home buyers, expanded "community-based mental health facilities" for the homeless, and so on.

The only thing that might be labeled "conservative" about Kemp's laundry list—and that only in a very modern sense—is his refusal to say where the money will come from. A recent puffer on Kemp in these pages treats this as a peccadillo, but it seems to me that it establishes the essential phoniness of "bleeding-heart conservatism," as it is called. Is there a crisis of the underclass in this country? Is giving third-graders $2 a book a sensible response to it? If so, why should the financing of this allegedly splendid idea depend on a publicity-seeking congressman with some extra PAC money? What about all the third-graders in other districts?

To be sure, new approaches to America's social problems are needed and welcome. Gingrich's and Kemp's ideas, to the extent they aren't simply hot air, are what used to be called "neoliberal": market-oriented, anti-bureaucratic, and so on. But what has blocked these ideas for the past decade has been far less the liberal establishment than conservative opposition to any major national initiative (other than vacuous volunteerism) to address any social problem (other than drugs).

Gingrich now aspires to create "an outpouring of civic energy and commitment" to "bring about . . . change in individuals, families, and communities." Heavens. Patriotic cadres and reshaping human nature: sounds more like Chairman Mao than Ronald Reagan. Everyone out for predawn calisthenics in front of McDonald's! Meanwhile, he keeps on attacking "liberals."

Obviously Gingrich and Kemp, if not Kristol and Buchanan, realize that conservatism has been missing something that voters are beginning to want. Thus their efforts to repackage the movement in ways that liberals will find irritatingly familiar. If conservatism now stands for an active and specific concern for the poor, and a positive distaste for military adventurism, that's real nice. But it's a bit hard to swallow the ideological bait-and-switch.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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Governors to urg
Federal polluters are high
By David Bauman
Gannett News Service
WASHINGTON — The nation's governors, concerned that President Bush's plans for cleaning up pollution at federal facilities
FEB-25-90
FEB-26-90
Governors taking school goals to Bush
'If you make a mess you clean it up'
Governors Urge Expanded Funding for Head Start Program
Governors meeting focusing on education
FEB-23-90
Governors Press the U.S. To Clean Up Its Pollution
Governors will sign clean air pact
Governors debate question of federal funding for sch
FEB-27-90
By Thomas Hargrove
The Virginian-Pilot
Norfolk, VA
Circulation: M-F a.m. 146,550
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to back education objective
Governors' task force to study coast erosion
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AM—131,000
Governors tackle drugs at state level
By ROCHELLE SHARPE
Gannett News Service
On the roads again:
Chicago meeting enlists Ted Danson in the 'One Million Marylanders'
Nation's governors to share information on dr
By Gov. W. Donald Schaefer
The nation's governors meet twice each year—summer and winter—to compare notes and talk
women. The all take their job very seriously.
They are deeply concerned about
and Gulf Coast areas. Our aim was to come up with a comprehensive plan because we all rec
one state can't fix the p
posals for protecting the oceans and coastal areas, the press paid attention to what we had to say.
concerned about use and abuse of
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CORRESPONDENCE

Color bind

To the editors:
In your editorial "For Whom Bell Tolls" (May 21), you seem to agree that black women law students at Harvard need black women law professors as role models. "The absence of role models is the desperate and perhaps psychologically indispensable explanation for what must be a demoralizing phenomenon. There just aren't enough appropriate role models to go around."

If Frederick Douglass had waited for a black role model, he would have remained in slavery. If W. E. B. Du Bois had waited for a black role model, he would have never left Great Barrington, Massachusetts. There was a time in American black history when parents held up whites as appropriate role models for their children, telling them, "You can not only do what he does, you can do better!"

For TNR to imply that people are able to identify only with those of their race means that no black can be held up as a role model for a white child. The physiological compartmentalizing of America will continue until we have the overweight, underweight, left-handed, bald, and those with overbite demanding appropriate role models in positions of power and authority. When that happens, unfortunately, there will be those who will take them seriously.

JULIUS LESTER
North Amherst, Massachusetts

Panama banal

To the editors:
Carla Anne Robbins's "Growing Pains in Panama" (May 28) diagnoses Panamanian political gawkiness astutely as a symptom of a puberty long gone stale. She completely misses the mark, however, when she attributes it to an absence of "national pride" and "identity"—a journalistic oversimplification typical of much of the U.S. media's coverage of Panamanian affairs.

There is an unmistakable Panamanian identity stretching across Panama's rural and urban poor, middle, and upper classes. Although certainly not a magic salve for all its ailments, the country's unique culture can act to help ease Panama out of political adolescence by encouraging the very communication Robbins suggests is lacking in President Guillermo Endara's government. One has only to experience the rich mixture of pre-Colombian, Spanish, African, and native Indian folklore to understand innate "people power" at work. More than dividing Panamanians, these diverse strains of influence are a rich common heritage Panamanians acknowledge proudly.

The unrelenting onslaught of U.S. media fads and fetishes, as well as a military dictatorship that sought to divide rather than unite, have damaged but not destroyed this sense of commonality among Panamanians. Perhaps under its new leaders the republic can invigorate a national pride wilted by two decades of silence between Panamanians, and too much talk with Americans.

MERCEDES K. MORRIS
Boston, Massachusetts

Guns 'n ruses

To the editors:
The disinformation is not in the NRA ads telling women they have the right to choose to own a handgun (Notebook, June 4), but in your comments on these ads. The allegation of the Firearms Policy Project that any handgun is 100 times more likely to be used in a murder, suicide, or fatal accident than to kill a criminal ignores the fact that the handgun owner doesn't normally have to kill, or even shoot, to prevent a crime. Accordingly, the vast majority of handguns never kill anyone. Basing your argument on the relatively few handguns actually used in killings distorts reality by reducing all handgun owners to the level of the most unstable, careless, or criminal—or tells them they must leave a criminal's corpse on the floor for their handgun to have been used properly. It also insults the women to whom the NRA ads are directed by paternalistically assuming they do not have the competence to learn to use a handgun responsibly, or to weigh the risks of owning one against those of being defenseless in a high-crime neighborhood. If police can learn to use handguns safely and properly, does TNR believe women can't?

LANDON LOCKETT
Austin, Texas

Saddam enchanted evening

To the editors:
To our dismay, Laurie Mylroie and I found a fragment from our 1987 TNR piece "Back Iraq" lumped in with excerpts by naked apologists for Saddam Hussein ("A Man We Can Work With: A Sampler," May 7). Wait a minute. We argued for limited tactical cooperation with a lesser evil against a greater one, at

continued on page 41

CHINA REVISITED

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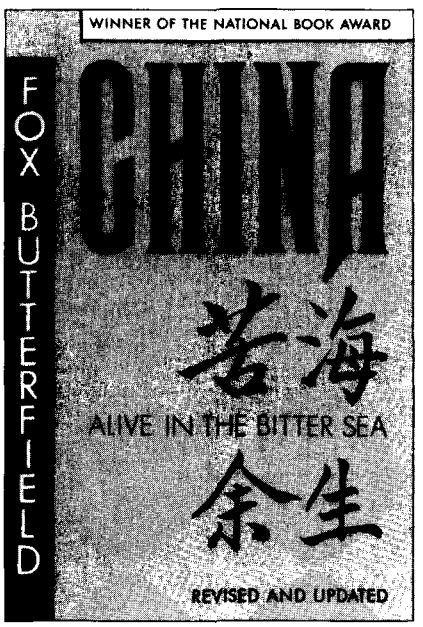
The classic book on contemporary China— winner of the National Book Award—has now been revised and updated. Fox Butterfield, the former *New York Times* Peking bureau chief, explores the causes and consequences of China's recent turmoil, drawing on his return visit to China after last year's Tiananmen Square massacre.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 2, 1990

INDISCRIMINATE GOAL

Ever since Senator Edward Kennedy introduced the Civil Rights Act of 1990 last February, he has insisted that it has nothing to do with racial quotas. He claims that anyone who says it does is bent on miring it in a "dead-end debate." Foes of the bill, including those anxious about quotas, are "the same diehard opponents of civil rights" who "have attempted to block every other civil rights bill in Congress in recent years." Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, also has called into question the motives of the bill's critics. "What are they trying to do, keep blacks in permanent second-class citizenship? I've heard these same old hackneyed arguments all my life, and I would hate to think it's latent racism."

But the issue of quotas remains at the center of the debate. It has been there for some time, and it has been a concern of many civil libertarians. The tension between the ideas of equality of opportunity and equality of results has strained liberalism itself. The legal and political history of that tension over the last two decades forms a large part of the fragmented internal history of the Democratic Party.

The bill, co-sponsored by Representative Gus Hawkins of California, doesn't mandate quotas in hiring. But it gives employers a strong incentive to adopt them—or else face lawsuits alleging discrimination that would be costly to defend and difficult to win. (Employers would never openly impose quotas for hiring blacks, women, Hispanics, the disabled, etc. That would invite reverse discrimination suits by white males. So quotas would be adopted quietly, informally, almost imperceptibly.) Kennedy-Hawkins operates on the presumption that proportionality is natural in the workplace. In other words, given unbiased behavior by employers, the percentage of blacks hired as computer programmers or actuaries or college teachers should automatically match the percentage of qualified blacks in the entire community. There is, of course, the terribly vexing problem of how one defines qualified. Moreover, racial and ethnic groups do cluster in occupations (Chinese scientists, Greek restaurateurs, Jewish doctors, Irish lawyers, Korean grocers) for reasons other than racial, ethnic, or gender bias. And when one group is overrepresented in a particular line of work, that means others may be underrepresented. Maybe the underrepresented have been discriminated against, but not necessarily.

Under Kennedy-Hawkins, it's simply assumed. The burden of proof is on the employer to show that a racial imbalance in any job category is not the result of prejudice. The plaintiff does not have to cite a specific employment practice that caused the disparity; a broad group of practices will do. The employer then has the difficult task of proving a negative. Often a decision to hire an employee is entirely subjective. Perhaps the employer simply likes the person or feels he or she will fit in better. Hiring one person also means that another does not fill the slot. Every act of inclusion may be interpreted as an implicit act of exclusion, raising the issue of prejudice. "Employers will simply capitulate and hire by the numbers, impairing not only the principle of American equality but, inevitably, American efficiency and productivity," wrote former civil rights lawyer Morris Abram in a June 7 letter to President Bush. Abram, like Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, urged Bush to veto Kennedy-Hawkins.

Advocates of the bill argue that it merely restores rights that were taken away in five Supreme Court decisions last year. The most important of those decisions, *Wards Cove* v. *Atonio*, sought to revive the original intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That legislation was passed amid assurances that employers would not be required to adopt quotas or maintain any particular racial balance in their work force. Employers were to be colorblind. Since then the notion that any racial disparity reflects bias in hiring crept into civil rights law. In its 1971 ruling in *Griggs* v. *Duke Power*, the Supreme Court held that minorities and women could pursue employment discrimination suits by pointing to the "disparate impact" of hiring practices rather than proving intentional bias. If a job criterion had the effect of cutting blacks out of management positions, the employer was required to

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justify it as a "business necessity," proving that it was not a subterfuge for bias. Faced with this, "the only practicable option for many employers will be to adopt racial quotas," wrote Justice Byron White in his majority opinion in *Wards Cove*. That decision, which the Bush administration has supported, permits suits based on disparate impact, but it makes them harder to win. The plaintiff must prove that a particular practice has had an unfair and harmful discriminatory effect.

Kennedy has shrewdly managed the crafting of and support for the Civil Rights Act of 1990. He has tried to make it more palatable to senators, such as John Danforth of Missouri, Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, and Charles Robb of Virginia, who have offered amendments to allay the anxieties of their constituents about the quota issue. In the initial version of Kennedy-Hawkins, an employer was required to show that an employment practice is a "business necessity" by proving it "essential to job performance." The word "essential" was criticized as too rigid. Now it must be proved that the practice has a "substantial and demonstrable relationship to job performance." This satisfied Danforth and the others, who promptly endorsed Kennedy-Hawkins. But the change may be cosmetic, a distinction without a real difference. In another change, the requirement that an employment practice be defended by "objective evidence" was dropped.

The prominence that the Kennedy-Hawkins bill has taken on is a testimony to how cynical both parties have become about civil rights, race, and poverty. Bush is searching for a way to balance the contending forces so that his popularity polls remain completely unaffected by anything he might do. If the Kennedy-Hawkins bill sails through Congress as expected, it will present him with a dilemma. Unlike his predecessor in the White House, he has attracted considerable support from blacks. If he should carry as little as 20 percent of the black vote in the 1992 election, the obstacles to the Democrats gaining the presidency could well be insuperable. He doesn't want to veto the bill and sour his courtship of the black middle class. But he's also leery of alienating his business constituency by signing it as currently written. Furthermore, he wants to keep the Republican right quiescent.

Meanwhile, the civil rights leaders seem content with a bill that would assist the most successful and prosperous blacks, the top third. The fact that they have made it their priority for 1990 suggests that they have not devised a program to deal with the other two-thirds, or that after decades of frustration they have lost their will.

There's still plenty of time to work out some sort of compromise. The bill won't reach the Senate floor until late June, the House floor until July. If Kennedy agreed to leave the burden of proof with plaintiffs, as *Wards Cove* does, Bush would endorse the bill in a flash. Under *Wards Cove* the employer still has a heavy burden: after the plaintiff makes his case, the employer remains obligated to prove that his employment practice "serves, in a significant way," his "legitimate employment goals." In fact, John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, has proposed this change to Kennedy. It would be a shame to lose the good things the bill contains: it gives women, ethnics, the disabled, recovering alcoholics, and other minorities in discrimination cases the right to seek compensatory and punitive damages at a jury trial; it lengthens the time under which plaintiffs can challenge discriminatory seniority systems; and it extends to the workplace sanctions for racial and sexual harassment.

Meanwhile, Governor Douglas Wilder of Virginia has pointed to what's really missing here. "It doesn't solve the problem," he said. And that problem is that many poor blacks are not even at the starting line of the playing field. Even if discrimination in all of its possible manifestations is removed, they would still be on the outside. Dealing with the economic and social crises that encapsulate them in a seemingly perpetual state of disappointment and despair is an overwhelming task. Bush, Congress, and civil rights leaders seem to prefer the more manageable, smaller, narrower path. On this, the political system is as impoverished as the underclass.

NOTEBOOK

GAINS NOTHING: A new argument is percolating through the media for a cut in the capital gains tax: it would save the government billions by reducing the cost of the savings and loan bailout. The case is as follows. The portfolios of failed or failing S&Ls are full of junk bonds and real estate investments. A lower tax on capital gains would increase the value of these assets, thus reducing the failure rate as well as the bailout cost for those S&Ls that do fail. The reasoning is seductive, but the flaw is not hard to find. A tax break increases the value of an asset like real estate only to the extent it will save the owner money—which is precisely the extent to which it will cost the government money. If a top-rate capital gains tax reduction from 28 percent to 15 percent increases the value of some property from, say, $100,000 to $110,000, that is only because $10,000 is the market's best estimate of the present value of that future tax break. It is also the present value of the government's future lost revenues. The two numbers are, by definition, identical. In short, the government cannot possibly save more by raising the value of S&L holdings through a tax break than it will lose from the tax break itself. In fact, since the tax break is extended indiscriminately, and not just to assets the government has an indirect stake in through its bailout guarantee, such a break is a clear net loser for the government. This says nothing about the general merits of a capital gains cut, which we find wanting for reasons rehearsed often in

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these pages. But the latest twist certainly adds nothing new to them.

YELTSIN WISDOM WATCH ⬌

"Pesky radicals like Yeltsin have even less of the political clout that would be needed to engineer Gorbachev's downfall." —*Newsweek* cover story on Gorbachev, June 4

"If the two men can't come to terms, the country won't be big enough for both of them. One will have to go." —*Newsweek* cover story on Yeltsin, June 11 •

Poles not at the polls.

MISSING THE VOTE

By Maria Balinska

WARSAW

Two weeks before Poland's local elections—the country's first completely free elections in half a century—an especially weary-looking Tadeusz Mazowiecki had a sobering message for Krakow's seventy-five Solidarity-backed candidates. "I have the impression," the prime minister said, "that . . . people still see these elections as reruns of past local elections, except with Solidarity candidates." He was right. Here, finally, was the opportunity to banish small-town party hacks who were resisting the winds of change from Warsaw. Just as fundamentally, these elections and the new law separating the powers between central and local government were designed to usher in autonomous, accountable town halls. But the campaign never took off. Fifty-eight percent of the electorate stayed home on May 27.

The contrast to last year's parliamentary election, which led to the fall of the Communists, could not have been greater. Then, every available vertical surface—tree, shop front, tram—was plastered with the Solidarity logo and the smiling Lech Walesa clasping the local candidate. This time you had to make an effort to find campaign posters, despite the fact that more than eighty political groupings were vying for public support. Even novel inducements like offering free "election sausage" to those who showed up at rallies failed to attract many people. And scant press coverage did nothing to raise the campaign's low profile.

In discussing with Poles this public lapse into passivity I kept encountering one phrase: "It's easier to break out of prison than to know what to do once you're out." Last year the extreme unpopularity of the country's former rulers was an obvious spur to political activity. Volunteers sprang out of the woodwork. Now that they have overthrown the Communists, many Poles regard running for public office with a certain dread. In small towns and villages the Citizens' Committee (the umbrella organization Walesa created to fight in last year's elections, in which the Communists had guaranteed themselves a majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament) often had to twist arms or make do with second best in order to get enough people on the slate.

Those candidates who took their responsibilities seriously faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles. To begin with, there was no information available about their local districts. Up until the elections even most maps remained confidential. As for finances or property holdings, the *nomenklatura*, feverishly using their last days in office to buy and sell municipal land cheaply, were naturally reluctant to divulge any figures.

The Solidarity Citizens' Committee adopted a typically pragmatic approach to the problem; it set up a Candidates' Advice Center in Warsaw. Decorated with fantastical theater posters, the Center seems to have offered more group therapy than political advice. Andrzej Lubiatowski, the architect who runs it, says this was inevitable since candidates and "experts" alike (architects, lawyers, and psychologists chosen for their interest in urban issues) were learning from scratch. The typical candidate came in without any questions at all, expecting handouts on his or her local district. "Anything," says Lubiatowski, "that would keep them from thinking for themselves." Only on the second or third visit would he or she begin to ask questions: What is local government? How does it draw up its budget? How should the signs outside the local government office be painted? Platform ideas came last and, according to Lubiatowski, consisted mostly of "beautiful dreams with no regard for reality and, in particular, money." The final session of advice-giving—a dose of cold water—convinced most candidates that promises were out of the question for this campaign.

The Solidarity badge of approval remains the surest way to identify "good" people. Hence the bitter fights between rival political groupings in the mill city of Lodz over the right to use *Solidarnosc* in their title. (In the end Solidarity granted neither the privilege, and both used it.) With one or two exceptions, the Citizens' Committee represented the Solidarity option. In cities they won an easy 85 percent to 97 percent of the council seats, although their overall score was brought down to 41.5 percent by poor results in rural areas, where there is opposition to the present government's agricultural policy. But the victories were deceptive: no major political party ran opposite them. Thirty-eight percent of the seats went to so-called independents, a grab bag of former Communists, mavericks, and local personalities. Ironically, it may very well be the broad social base of the Solidarity movement—the famous worker-intellectual coalition—in the 1980s that has made Poland lag behind Czechoslovakia and Hungary (where opposition to the Communists was mainly confined to intellectual circles) in developing a number of

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political parties. Moreover, few people want to stand outside the Solidarity ethos. The other problem, of course, is that the trail of destruction and cynicism that the Communist Party has left in its wake has tainted the very notion of political party.

For those parties that did challenge Solidarity it was not as important to win these elections as to establish themselves as viable political alternatives. Their campaign platforms were on national issues—principally economic policy—and were highly critical of the Mazowiecki government. But few of them—from anarchists and former Communists to business disciples of the economist Friedrich Hayek and nationalist extremists—even registered on the nation's political consciousness. The Communists, slimmed down (from 2 million to 70,000 members) and repackaged as the Social Democratic Party, are now articulate advocates of the new democratic system. They do not have a very high profile, however. (It took me forty-five minutes to track down their offices in what used to be the highly guarded Communist Party Headquarters in Krakow.) And their election score—0.28 percent of seats—was predictably low. (They claim that they have more like 6 percent since many of their comrades, fearful of public revulsion against the left, ran as independents.) The two main parties on the right—the Confederation for an Independent Poland and the Christian Nationalist Union—each cornered 0.1 percent of the seats. The only force to emerge with any certainty was the Polish Peasants Party, a union of the remains of one of the Communists' former allies and other peasant groupings, which won 6.5 percent of the seats.

Now that the local elections have taken place, Mazowiecki, in the words of one farmer, has shoes as well as a hat. But the fact that a majority of the electorate didn't help to choose the shoes reflects an apathy that goes beyond the disorientation of people new to democratic thinking. Inevitably, much of the political indifference comes from frustration with the economic situation. There was a general realization when Mazowiecki took office that things would get worse before they got better. But as time goes by, the determination with which many people initially met slashes in subsidies and the freeze on salaries is being eroded. Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz's IMF-approved economic plan is doing what it was supposed to: inflation has fallen from the 78 percent monthly rate in January to just over 4 percent in the month of May. But the structure of the Polish economy has changed little apart from the appearance of huge numbers of private street vendors crowding the city sidewalks with meat, butter, cheese, and bread marginally cheaper than that in the stores behind them. Those stores are still part of the state monopoly.

Privatization—the second crucial plank of the Balcerowicz plan—is being stalled for political reasons. And the resistance is not just from the 65 percent of Parliament associated with the old regime, but also from an influential left-leaning chunk of Solidarity deputies. To begin with, there's the question of whom to sell the state businesses to. The Ministry of Finance wants to take bids from the first paying customer—with few questions asked. Solidarity deputies insist that workers be given preferential access to the shares in their factory. Unfortunately, in many cases it is the present managers—from the ranks of the despised *nomenklatura*—who are better qualified to become the country's new industrial entrepreneurs. (Eager not to imitate the purges of its Communist predecessors, the Mazowiecki government has been slow in replacing managers, civil servants, and even television journalists.) Public reaction would be fearsome if these people were to become the new bosses at the dawn of capitalism.

The second major problem of privatization is unemployment, which currently stands at an estimated 400,000—3 percent of the population. Worse is yet to come (the World Bank predicts 2 million). Solidarity is understandably reluctant to back measures that will throw its members out of jobs. And as the economic situation worsens, the response of the public to unemployment is likely to become more and more volatile. There was a foretaste in the recent rail strike, which threatened to bring the country to a halt but which Walesa, in a dramatic late-night meeting, managed to call off.

Another controversial government idea is allowing local governments to run their own businesses for profit. The reasoning behind this is simple. Cities, towns, and villages don't have much money. At the same time the market economy is proving slow to develop. So why not let the newly elected local representatives try their hand at entrepreneurship? One proposal currently making the rounds in Krakow is to open a municipal bank that would be owned by the city and, of course, would invest in the city. This sounds like the best of all possible worlds—which is precisely why so many people, wary of anything smacking of utopianism, oppose it. The government's right-wing opponents accuse it of trying to introduce socialism through the back door. Supporters of the idea defend it as a temporary solution, but the only guarantee they offer for this is the "quality" of the people who would be in charge.

Poland, however, is coming to the end of the period when national politics could be summed up in the words "Solidarity" and "Communists." The split is essentially between the radicals and the gradualists, between those who would rather see more done to encourage private initiative and those who continue to want a substantial role for the state, between those who want to see political parties and those who want to preserve a broad-based social movement.

Walesa seems determined to transform the Citizens' Committee into a viable political force, able to challenge the group of more left-leaning Solidarity deputies holding sway in Parliament. He recently dismissed one of those deputies, Henryk Wujec, from the position of national Citizens' Committee secretary. As Walesa seems to realize, the current public apathy—whether from the exhaustion of making ends meet, dissatisfac-

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tion with the present government, or simply not understanding the process of local democracy—is dangerous. It can all too easily be turned into extremist action, as the rail strike demonstrated. The emerging nationalist groups are also hoping to exploit the discontent to their own political advantage. They have been marginalized in these elections, but that could all change by next year's parliamentary elections.

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A velvet election.

CAMPAIGN CARNIVAL

By Miriam Horn

PRAGUE

The artist who lends his talents to politics agrees to a dangerous deal. Like the painters and poets of the French and Russian revolutions, he may find himself in places he never meant to go, serving as court painter, propagandist, "engineer of the soul." His skills may prove too fine in the end. His speechmaking and stagecraft and visual persuasion will capture the people's imagination, only to deliver them into the waiting hands of power.

The artist-politicians who wrote, designed, and directed Civic Forum's campaign and won 48 percent of the vote in the Czechoslovakian elections are all too familiar with such dangers. For forty-two years they have gagged on and sometimes composed the saccharine fairy tales of socialist realism, living with "one foot in and one foot of out of the world of cunning shits," in Vaclav Havel's phrase. They know that "the same words that electrify society with their freedom and truthfulness can also mesmerize, deceive, inflame, madden, beguile," that though Lenin and Marx set out to free people, their words metamorphosed into the germ of all gulags. All the tragedies of the world, Havel has written, "derive from the transformation of a humble message into an arrogant one." And so the intellectual must emulate Cassandra, he advised, unmasking the perfidious words of the powerful. The problem for artists on the outside who become politicians on the inside is how to play both Cassandra and Priam at the same time.

Watching the revolution as it plays again and again on TV screens scattered around Prague, it is easy to believe that these rebels are somehow inoculated against the arrogance of power and the cheap manipulative tricks that have infected American politics. They're not. So Civic Forum and its Slovakian counterpart, People Against Violence (VPN), have concocted a vaccine, mixed of irony, self-mockery, and willful amateurism. Having long endured a politics imposed from above, full of insufferably wooden rhetoric, elaborate ceremony, and self-important men in cheap suits and slicked-back hair, they decided the only antidote was to make this campaign into a carnival. Politics would be, for the first time in memory, fun.

The May Day celebration was a perfect place to start, with its despised tradition of precision drill and formal pageantry. Rather than ignore the day, these artist-politicians decided to "reimage" it, in VPN member Martin Butora's words. In Bratislava, the children were armed with hundreds of rolls of toilet paper and colored crêpe paper and sent out to decorate the streets. Campaign workers donned huge papier mâché heads, with scowling, puffy faces marking them as members of the old regime, and mugged and pranced on the backs of trucks winding through the streets.

This atmosphere was sustained in Prague and Bratislava until election day. Villagers were lured to political rallies with promises of free goulash, children's puppet shows, and appearances by such heartthrob movie stars as Milan Knazko, a VPN candidate. In front of Civic Forum's headquarters in Prague, celebrity folksingers and jazz musicians performed, along with punkers, Beatles look-alikes, and an all-boy band wearing dresses with compact discs dangling from their ears. Kids passed out buttons with Civic Forum's smiley face. At the castle the new palace guards, in their red, white, and blue uniforms designed by Oscar-winning set designer Theodore Pistek, couldn't take themselves seriously: their stony faces kept breaking into grins as they went through the motions of the changing of the guard. In Slovakia VPN passed out lollipops and balloons, put up posters featuring the Smurfs and Mickey Mouse ("Yuck, I hate Communism"), and even did a sort of "Candid Camera" TV commercial, bursting into a wedding reception to get testimonials from the bride and groom. The velvet revolution at times became more of a velvet painting revolution; even campaign workers cringed at the excesses of kitsch.

As Civic Forum climbed in the polls, other parties jumped in for a piece of the action. The Christian Democrats (KDH), whose pious posters featured flaxen-haired children bathed in golden light or slender, disembodied fingers holding the party's emblematic cross, gathered a group of young blondes with teased hair, tight white miniskirts, black high heels, and the KDH emblem on their backs to cozy up to male passers-by and press political pamphlets into their sweaty palms. The Socialist Party, falling badly in the polls, plastered the city with its own posters just days before the election. "This is it," read the caption, above which a perky blonde smiled brightly in a soaking wet white T-shirt holding out the party emblem.

As the carnival grew giddier, Civic Forum supporters covered Prague with hand-drawn posters and placed pictures of Havel on every bank and beauty salon and street sweeper. When asked about such a partisan use of state property, Civic Forum's campaign managers shrugged: "It's popular initiative, what can we do?" Other parties'

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posters were slashed, torn off walls, or defaced with graffiti. Reflecting the fear that the Christian Democrats would introduce a "new totality" (religious education, anti-pornography laws, and the outlawing of abortion are part of their platform), swastikas were spray-painted on KDH posters, and a new caption added: "The right hand of the new inquisition." The Slovakian National Party (whose platform is anti-Czech, anti-Hungarian, anti-Gypsy, and somewhat more covertly anti-Semitic) was mocked with posters showing a burly man in native dress brandishing a Slovakian flag. The wind has whipped the flag around his head, covering his mouth, eyes, and ears to leave him deaf, dumb, and blind.

Thanks to the students, not a single Communist Party poster could be found anywhere in Prague, and just one banner hung well out of reach on the Museum of Klement Gottwald (soon to be made into a museum of totalitarianism). That banner pleaded, incredibly: "There is no democracy without pluralism and no pluralism without the Communist Party." Yet the Communists' emblematic pair of cherries could be seen all over town. Fanged worms crawled out of some, while others dangled like earrings over Stalin's ears or swung between the legs of caricatured Communist heroes. At VPN's headquarters, formerly the Party's House of Political Education, a show of humorous art exhibited shrouded busts of Lenin and torn Communist Party flags spread across the floor for visitors to walk on. Handwritten haiku appeared in shop windows. "Communists don't lie and steal and the earth is not round." "They promise you'll live like pigs in the corn crib, but they mean it literally." Or, most ominously, "Vote for the Communists, and you vote for the last time."

The public taunting of the Communists took on a disturbingly bloodthirsty tone despite all the revelry. Above the new "democracy wall" in Prague was a rogues gallery, wooden silhouettes depicting more than a dozen of the most despised leaders; Honecker's and Ceausescu's silhouettes were beheaded, and Stalin was "disappeared" by some anonymous public artist. A photographer sold pictures of Christmas trees ornamented with secret police hanged by the neck. In Bratislava's main park the massive statue of Gottwald was smeared with red paint, the word "murderer" scrawled across its chest. Civic Forum gave no sanction, of course, to the attacks on the other parties, and Havel repeatedly urged his supporters to preserve the "clean, moral face" of the new politics. Still, when the government arrested former Communist leaders Vasil Bilak and Milos Jakes just two days before the election, some wondered whether the rabble-rousing hadn't gone too far.

The coordinating committee of VPN, the more shaggy and laid-back crowd, was generally eager to sustain the flower-child sweetness and spontaneity of the revolution. "We are amateurs in the best sense," said Butora. "We don't yet have the machinery of advertising in place here, though that, alas, will undoubtedly soon come." The aversion to the slick and calculated was evident in VPN's campaign materials. Their posters looked hand-scrawled. Their TV commercials, directed by such renowned filmmakers as Dusan Hanak, favored the grainy, unsteady style of an underground video. Candidates were interviewed on camera with a cigarette or drink in their hand, their rumpled hair and baggy sweaters broadcasting how entirely different they were from the stiffly formal spokesmen of the old regime. Man-on-the-street commercials often included interviews with people planning to vote for other parties. "Because it's true," said Anton Morasek, the documentary-maker who produced VPN's TV campaign. "And after forty years people know when they're being lied to."

In Prague, a more cold-blooded approach crept in, particularly in the person of Vladimir Zelezny, the producer of Civic Forum's TV campaign. "The revolution is over," he said. "And so is the time for amateurism. Amateurs don't run a country. Professionals run a country." He described the TV strategy he developed with the help of American political media consultant Frank Greer. The Civic Forum spokesperson, he explained, had to be a woman, but not too young or too pretty lest she alienate the female voters she was meant to woo. Forget grainy video veritas: spinning graphics and special effects were great for seducing a viewing audience not yet numbed to the tricks of TV. He agreed with Butora that negative campaigning was a bad idea, but for strategic reasons: when the Christian Democrats began attacking Havel for including Communists in his government, he argued, the public responded negatively, and Havel's moral stature as a martyr only grew.

The biggest mistake any party could make, said Zelezny, was to slip back into the rhetorical habits of the past. When the Christian Democrats defended their ally, Josef Bartoncik, against charges that he worked for the secret police, they spoke of provocations, conspiracies, demagoguery on the part of Civic Forum—words that stiffen every Czech and Slovak back, echoing as they do the platitudinous drone of the Party. In fact, the greatest challenge for the writers and intellectuals in VPN and Civic Forum has been to cleanse their politics of such contaminated words. The people have been too well-schooled in mendacity. They have turned sour on false promises and dogmatic slogans. Some words, such as "people" and "citizen," have been debased beyond all hope of immediate rescue, so instead these campaigns opted for "public" and "civic." Grammar had to be shaken up as well. For too long politics had been paternalistic and pedantic, wagging its finger at the children of the state. Now the imperative voice would be jettisoned. It would not be "Vote For Us," but only, "Civic Forum, A chance for the future."

Finally, the message had to be counterutopian. Even at the risk of losing votes, Civic Forum and VPN determined to tell people just how hard the coming changes would be, and just how false were the old promises of perfect safety and security. Havel himself, sounding a bit like Jimmy Carter, spoke often of the moral illness affecting the Czechoslovak people. "The last forty years," he said, "is something we inflicted on ourselves."

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Humility, in language and in leadership, seemed the best way to ensure that this marriage of art and politics does not degenerate, like so many before it, into a state-of-the-art tyranny. There is remarkably little arrogance here. Though some candidates are too eager to show their scars, to boast of the years spent in prison or silenced, this is a life-size group of (mostly) men. At rallies they hand out dopey caricatures of themselves, or joke that they keep checking in the mirror to make sure they aren't showing the telltale jowls of a Politburo member. Havel in particular steers clear of anything too fancy or grand. In his pictures he looks even smaller than he is, exhausted, a bit embarrassed, flashing that impish, gap-toothed grin. Still, a government can't sustain itself forever on parody and mischief and the elation of revolution. One wonders whether, when the inevitable letdown ensues, this castle full of artists will manage to keep the crowds laughing and resist the temptation to turn their words of freedom into truncheons.

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A report from the neighborhood.

THE TWO FACES OF BENSONHURST

By Andrew Sullivan

BENSONHURST, BROOKLYN

Twentieth Avenue in Bensonhurst starts in the Hudson River, where it's called Gravesend Bay, only a couple of miles from the Atlantic Ocean. You can see the ocean across the Belt Parkway, but Bensonhurst rarely looks. The neighborhood focuses inland, toward the hub of 86th Street, with its railway track suspended some sixty feet above the road, and beyond all the way down to 50th.

On a summer afternoon on 86th, youngsters hang out on the street corners, near clothing stores called Male Ego and Women's Dreams. There are wedding dress stores in between the pizzerias, and photograph studios with pictures of Italian newlyweds grinning at each other under white-fenced porticos. There are also Korean groceries, Chinese take-outs, and dozens of Off-Track Betting offices. Blacks mingle with whites and Hispanics in Asian-run stores. Italian and Chinese, Yiddish and Korean are spoken here, under the traffic on the streets.

As you walk down 20th and further into Bensonhurst, the place gets a little seedier: there are a few vacant lots and more discount stores. But on either side of the avenue stretch tree-lined streets, small red-brick houses, porches, and lawns. Two black women chat on the corner. Four kids in yarmulkes stand around a car. A Korean family sits out on the porch, next to a plaster donkey and a statue of Our Lady of Guadelupe on the lawn, covered in cellophane to protect her from the rain. A little further down, the brown brick 1970s building of St. Dominic's Church, with bingo at 11:30 on Tuesdays and Fridays, and further down still, P.S. 205, cardboard butterfly cutouts pasted to the windows.

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Once you've walked this far, it comes as something of a surprise to realize you've already passed the spot where Joseph Fama killed Yusuf Hawkins on August 23, 1989. The killing took place at 69th and 20th Avenue, near Yang's Deli and Joe Klein's Dental Supplies, within shooting distance of the cellophaned Lady of Guadelupe. The central, recurrent question of Bensonhurst is how these two things came together: how a seemingly model neighborhood of inner-city calm and easy coexistence became a watchword for racial hate.

As far as the residents of Bensonhurst are concerned, the answer to this question is simple. What connects their neighborhood to racism was a random act, made infamous by a hysterical media and by a few black activists. It could have happened anywhere else, they argue; it just happened to happen here. I could find only one individual in six days in the neighborhood who didn't share this belief. Along 18th Avenue stores carried blue ribbons in their windows (next to World Cup soccer posters) as a sign of a desired reconciliation. "It's the people who did this," explained an Italian deli owner. "We want peace. Unity. Sharpton's only happy when people are killing people."

It turned out, however, that the blue ribbons were not some spontaneous outburst of generosity: a couple of store-owners admitted that a local group of citizens had brought them around. And there's considerable evidence to support the Bensonhurst of media legend. The whites who greeted the Sharpton marches by holding up "Joey Fama for President" placards, brandishing watermelons, and twirling basketballs were not all outsiders. And even those keen to tell you prejudice does not exist end by relating a couple of incidents that prove it does.

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A young Italian claimed there was no fundamental problem. He then told me he'd given up a job in real estate after finding that landlords never rented to perfectly qualified non-Italians. A black woman, who said she'd never had any trouble, also admitted that white teenagers called her "Brillo-pad" and "nigger" while she was standing at a bus stop. One black family who had been bequeathed a row house on an Italian street lasted only a few months before they felt they had to leave. Many complained about being followed around in stores by managers who assume that any black is a shoplifter. One woman said her change had been thrown at her in the supermarket. The integrated high schools are, according to several graduates, hardly immune from racial abuse.

Still, there is something about the earnestness with which so many residents of Bensonhurst insist on their good intentions that is difficult to dismiss. The people of the neighborhood were almost desperately concerned that their efforts at racial harmony not be slighted and adamant that real progress had been made. And what was interesting even about the anecdotes of racism was not so much the stories themselves as the tone in which they were conveyed. It was not one of desperation, or even of resentment. The tales were invariably part of a larger story about how racism was not that big a problem in their lives, and how, if anything, things had gotten better in the past few years.

Perhaps the most surprising exponents of this view are the neighborhood's 7,000 or so blacks. Of the score or so blacks I spoke with, who either worked or lived in Bensonhurst, only one sided unequivocally with Sharpton. And only he had actually marched. Most blamed Sharpton for much of the trouble: "As far as I can see, one person started all this, and that's Al Sharpton," a black woman told me. "I've never experienced any prejudice. I felt a little tension in the grocery store just after it happened. But once they get to know your face, it's OK. It's not your color. It's whether they know you or not." "I blame Al Sharpton," said another black woman. "He's making life worse for all the black people who work here. He shouldn't blame everybody. I don't." A few blacks reported that it was the marches, rather than the original incident, that had intensified racial hatred in the neighborhood.

This other, more banal, Bensonhurst creeps up on you slowly. It strikes you first in the easy racial mixing on the streets. But it's perhaps best illustrated in a few of the residents themselves. Take Kenny, a twenty-eight-year-old Italian-American, who like many his age in Bensonhurst still lives with his family. He took me around the neighborhood one day in the pouring rain, pointing out, with what came close to pride, the black, Jewish, Hispanic, and Italian enclaves of his home. In the course of the conversation, he let it slip that one sister had married a divorced Puerto Rican (the family calls him "Poncho" to his face), another was dating a man a decade or so younger than herself, and a brother was dating a Chinese girl. His Italian-Catholic immigrant family seemed to be taking all this in stride. According to Kenny, even black-white dating is acceptable if the man is white and the woman black. The reverse is more problematic, a fact that has as much to do with prevailing sexism as with racism.

A host of other stories corroborates this kind of picture. A local truck driver said that his fellow drivers were all black. "One of them is really black. I call him the gorilla. But, you know, we're like this." He put his arm around my shoulder. "And if I get into trouble out on the road, who am I going to rely on?" A local Hispanic man said he was so sick of the media hype of local racism he wouldn't turn on the television when the Fama verdict was announced. He said it brought out racist feelings he didn't want to feel. Another Italian said he recently took his pregnant wife to predominantly black Coney Island at 1 a.m., something he'd never have done a few years ago: "Where else am I going to get sausage and peppers at one o'clock in the morning?"

Or take Father Barozzi, a priest at St Dominic's. He's a genial Italian, with a heavy accent, and effortlessly Catholic. At 4 p.m. he asked me whether I wanted scotch in my coffee or a glass of wine. His church, a few blocks from the site of the Hawkins murder, is making a genuine effort to counter bigotry. (Both David Dinkins and Al Sharpton visited it recently to announce an agreement to suspend temporarily the protest marches through the neighborhood.) This spring Barozzi held what he calls a "black month" for children in church education. Pictures of Martin Luther King Jr. and other prominent black Americans were put up in the sanctuary; a black priest was invited to give sermons at all masses one weekend; prayer vigils were held at the murder site. Yet Barozzi also recounts the number of Italians he knows who have been mugged by blacks; speaks of what he sees as the disagreeable way of life of blacks—loud music late at night, the lack of strong family values, and so on; and reminds you that he is a northern Italian, with Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins. He is obviously a good man, but one whose effectiveness in this immigrant community means sharing some of the unconscious racism he is at other times trying to break down.

Or take Gerard. Born and brought up in Bensonhurst, he's a wiry, almost nerdy Italian in early middle age who made it to Columbia College and Law School. He went to Wall Street as a corporate tax lawyer, but in his twenties decided to do something for his old neighborhood and started a basketball team for local youth. This was in 1974. His first team practice was with three Italians, a Puerto Rican, and two blacks, in Most Precious Blood parish's converted bingo hall. It didn't get off to an auspicious start. "We hadn't been there fifteen minutes when a vanload of white kids pulled up and started pounding the windows, with bricks in their hands."

Gerard didn't give up the scheme despite mounting abuse. Each practice was a war of nerves as he shipped

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black kids from the nearby Marlboro Projects into a white neighborhood. There followed a white boycott of the team and some rough years in which his safety was threatened. Gerard gave up his job in Manhattan, set up a local law practice, and focused on what was becoming for him something of a religious vocation. He called the team Flames Neighborhood Youth Association, referring to the Holy Spirit. In 1977, as if in a movie plot, the team won the entire Catholic Youth Organization championship for Queens and Brooklyn. Suddenly all the neighborhood kids, black and white, wanted to be on the team. These days Gerard runs several teams, some in the CYO tournament and some in in-house competitions.

According to Gerard, the last decade has seen real progress in race relations in Bensonhurst: "Gradually, a really profound change has taken place. These kids from the projects have no fear at all anymore of walking down the block to the gym." Even this year, with the Hawkins killing occurring just before the season, no major trouble has taken place. In an early incident, a white from Bensonhurst maced a black from Coney Island outside practice one evening, but it turned out to be a typical teenage fight. Gerard sums up his tactics for dealing with it like this: "First you isolate the guy who did it, rather than force other people to side with him. . . . I told the black kid we'd deal with it, and we did. That was it. No police. No report. No press. No Al Sharpton."

I spent an afternoon with Gerard in the Marlboro Projects. Six thousand people live in these buildings, vast, square, red-brick monoliths, divided in the center by a road: a bleak, modernist contrast to the cozy row houses only blocks away. The projects are situated on the outskirts of Bensonhurst, cut off on three sides by railway tracks, and on the other by the vast elevated line. The symbolism of this massive barrier is clear. What unites the center of Bensonhurst is the very thing pushing these people out. Since the mid-1970s the projects have been predominantly black. The rest of Bensonhurst, though racially diverse and a workplace for many blacks, has virtually no black residents at all.

Everyone seemed genuinely glad to see Gerard, and vice versa. When pressed, they talked with disarming honesty about the racism they confront. None says it's getting worse. "They used to come here with sticks, stakes, and bricks," a twenty-nine-year-old remembers. "But all that came to a cease-stop." Others said racism was the least of their problems. "What they should think about doing is putting lights in the park here," said Charlie. "If you go anywhere else they have lights in the park. You could play basketball at night then. If you give them something to do you wouldn't get so much stuff going on." The stuff going on is a sharp rise in black-on-black killings and drug use in Marlboro. Gerard can rattle off the names of eight kids he knew who have been killed, and reckons the majority of the kids he knows have sold crack at one time or another. This year he was hoping to round off the season without a death on his teams, but two weeks ago another young black basketball player was shot. Joseph, a smart fifteen-year-old who plans to be an electrical engineer in Queens, says coolly of the interracial hype: "We don't have a history of killing them. We have a history of killing us."

To these people, Sharpton has a kind of cruel irrelevance. Sharpton hasn't come to the projects, and few here have gone to his marches. "We don't exist for him," one young black told me. "He's a mystery to me. At least he could have held a meeting here in the park. There ain't nobody coming to talk to us." The frustration is palpable: of all the problems facing the residents of Marlboro Projects—drugs, guns, poor housing, family breakdown, constant violence—none is at the center of the Bensonhurst furor. "If I was a publicity guy, I'd say, 'Racism, racism, racism,' because it's a great way to get media and grants," says Gerard. "But that's not the reality. For the most part, if a black person wants to get ahead, he can get ahead. A black guy from the Marlboro Projects can't get ahead, not because he's black, but because he's in the projects."

On Thursday, May 31, the Coalition for Harmony, an interfaith community group, held its first neighborhood open forum since the Hawkins killing. It took place in the Cotillion Terrace on 18th Avenue, a few blocks from the murder site. It's a ballroom of sorts, with glass chandeliers and mirrors in the shape of peacock feathers on the wall. On the stage there were back-lit pictures of waterfalls, next to a banner proclaiming: "Peace! Love! Harmony!" A bevy of clergy were due to speak, chaired by former Assemblyman Arnaldo Ferraro. Around 1,500 locals showed up: very few youngsters, and no blacks except one cleric from Bedford-Stuyvesant and someone to lead hymn-singing at the end.

The meeting began with an invocation in Italian, after which the entire audience made the sign of the cross. Then the assembled clergy spoke in platitudes for nearly an hour. Finally the current assemblyman, Peter Abbate, was invited to speak. As he got up, there were murmurings in the crowd. He announced that there was going to be another Sharpton march on Saturday. He asked them all to stay at home to avoid hostile media coverage. The last weekend's boycott of the march had been very successful: "We're asking you again, ignore it, go about your daily business. Don't give him the forum that he wants." The reaction began slowly at first, as people started standing up behind me, shouting random abuse at Abbate. Ferraro turned on him: "Why do we have to lock ourselves behind closed doors when they invade our territory?" A hysterical woman started yelling near the front: "Yusuf Hawkins's murder was *not* a racial incident. People don't know the truth. No one knows the truth."

Throughout this noise, some residents patiently waited by microphones at the front of the hall. A sort of hush intermittently let them be heard. Halting speeches in broken English were made in a flood of wounded

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pride and anger: "We are *not* racial," sobbed one woman. "I never have trouble with anybody." Another shouted: "We've lost control of our house and our street. My children are chased out of the schoolyard by the police when the marchers come. Why do they keep on coming here?"

About half the crowd was now standing and yelling. The assemblyman urged peace and harmony. A woman shrieked: "My peace and harmony went out of the window on August 24 when they arrested eight Italian boys and told all the black and Hispanic boys that they had nothing to do with it." It was Mrs. Mondello, the mother of Keith Mondello, one of the convicted boys. Abbate responded, "I know how you feel, Mrs. Mondello." "You can't know how I feel," she yelled back. "No one knows how I feel." "Let them march without the cops!" shouted a man at the back of the room. "Don't take away the rights of the people!"

A few residents went up to the microphones to appeal for calm. An older man said, "We're all minorities. We should stick together. They're just going to pick us off one by one." A young, nervous girl ventured, "There *is* racism in Bensonhurst," and the place erupted once again. The grievances went on and on. How much was this costing us? How come you can't get a permit for a block party with a month's notice and Sharpton gives the police two days' notice and the main high street shuts down? "Tell me," yelled one man. "Why are we afraid to walk the streets on Saturday? We should not be held hostage in our own *houses*." The only hush was for Mrs. Mondello, whose main point was that Gina Feliciano "is now and has only ever been a lowlife, drug-using prostitute whore." At this, the meeting exploded into menacing cheers.

It's not clear whether this is the Bensonhurst that will emerge from the agony of the last few months. Certainly the maximum sentences handed down last week to Fama and Mondello will likely take the sting out of Sharpton's marches. But whatever happens, another Bensonhurst clearly exists. It's difficult to spend much time in the neighborhood without being more impressed by the honesty with which people discuss their problems and their awkward attempts to deal with them than with the fear and suspicion lurking beneath the surface. It may, of course, all explode into the rage of that Thursday night. But if it does, not all of Bensonhurst will be behind it. Some even seem to grasp the larger symbolism of what is at stake. They ended the meeting, in a desperate bid to avoid complete chaos, with a clumsy invocation to sing "God Bless America." I thought it would be a fiasco. As it was, everyone stood and awkwardly held hands. And when they sang "My home, sweet home," they raised up their arms. •

Behind the Brooklyn boycott.

TROUBLE IN STORE

By Jonathan Rieder

FLATBUSH, BROOKLYN

Following a dispute between a black customer and a Korean merchant, blacks in a heavily Haitian part of Brooklyn's Flatbush section have been boycotting two Korean produce stores since the end of January. Protesters have kept the flow of customers to a trickle, vowing to drive the merchants from the neighborhood. Each side has made the inevitable Spike Lee allusions. In mid-May, in front of the Family Red Apple grocery store, a boycotter with a megaphone yelled, "Koreans must go. They should not be here in the first place. We are doing the right thing." Across the street the second Korean store displays a sign proclaiming: "Racism is wrong/Always... But ask yourself. Which side is preaching hate? Racism? Decide for yourself. Do the Right Thing."

As the Bensonhurst murder trial heightened more general concern about New York's racial climate, by May the boycott was threatening Mayor David Dinkins's aura as a racial healer. Actually, race relations were less dire than people feared, but at the time the prospect of racial unraveling seemed real. Not far from the boycott line, a black teen smashed the skull of a Vietnamese resident with a claw hammer, and his accomplices chanted, "Koreans go home." Already unsettled by crack and crime, the homeless and AIDS, New Yorkers had to confront the tribal animosities that continue to shape life in their city. As for the blacks and Koreans, tension emerged from the jostling of peoples with disparate experiences, sensibilities, and incomes. But the conflict had a less savory political side as well. Distinct from the irritations that gave it force, the boycott drew much of its strength from the angry passions of resurgent black power.

The details of the incident that triggered the boycott

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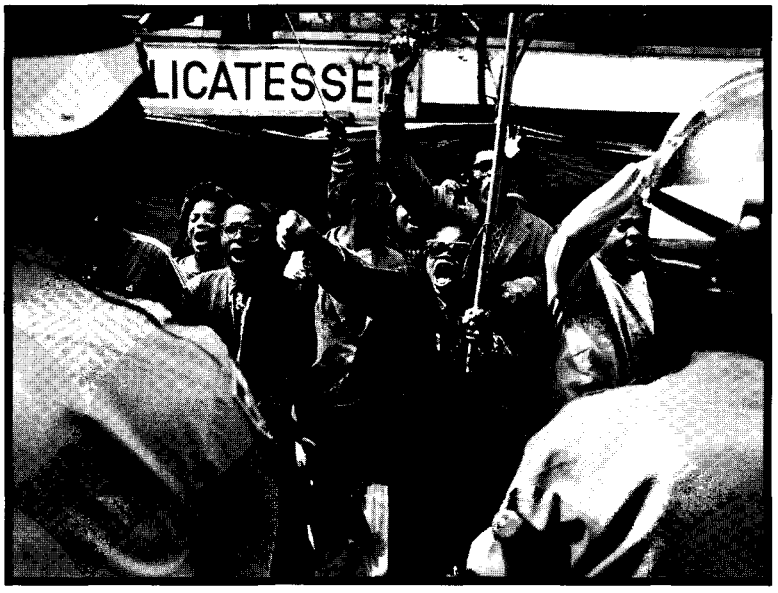
are murky. According to the protesters, the Koreans "disrespected an African sister," a Creole-speaking Haitian named Jiselaine Felissaint, who tired of waiting in the check-out line and headed for the door. When she refused the grocers' demand that she open her bag, they beat her savagely. The Koreans claim Felissaint paid two dollars for three dollars' worth of plantains and limes. When the cashier requested the dollar, she retorted, "You Chinese, Korean motherfucker. Go back to your country." The cashier said, "This is not your country, not my country, it's everybody's, right?" After an exchange of hot peppers and a tussle, the woman fell to the ground, claiming injury.

Rumors circulated that the Koreans had beaten a pregnant woman, that an elderly black woman was now in a coma. (The police and hospital reported a slight facial scratch.) The outraged crowd threw stones and bottles at the store. When a Korean took refuge in another produce store across the street, the crowd's wrath turned on it too. Through the spring, boycotters, ranging from two or three in the morning up to a few dozen in the evening, walked the picket line. Dinkins's representatives tried to resolve the dispute, but the boycotters never wavered: prosecute the Koreans, close both stores.



BOYCOTT OF KOREAN GROCERY STORE
PHOTO BY RICKY FLORES

Some twenty-two weeks later the face-off remains. Business at both stores has plummeted from thousands of dollars a day to less than $50. Korean merchant organizations pump $8,000 a month into each store. Skittish about anti-Asian sentiment, they decry an effort by "storm troopers" to drive them out of black communities.

For one merchant, standing in the solitude of his empty store, something perverse was happening. "Why do they chant, 'Korean people must go?' If you cut your hand, the color is the same. . . . We are all the same. But they say black is black power, black is special people." Across the street, another merchant asks, "How could we be rude to our customers? In this area, there are six fruit and vegetable stores. We are competing each other." His face betrays the strain of the siege. "This boycott is murder. This is mental killing. Why they do this to me?"

Part of the answer lies in the abrasions that since the early 1970s have created black-Korean conflict in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and elsewhere. The liberalized immigration law of the mid-'60s quickened the exodus of Koreans to the United States and led to a Korean takeover of retail niches in the ghetto economy. Blacks complain that Korean merchants do not treat them with dignity. As the slogan "Proud of Our Haitian Blood" indicates, the recently mobilized Haitians, smarting from the federal selection of their ethnicity as an AIDS risk factor, are especially sensitive to ethnic slight. And the rich vein of ethnocentrism in Korean culture and racist attitudes contribute to the blacks' sense that the Koreans, to borrow the ghetto vernacular, "dis" them. Even before he left South Korea, recalls one man, "I had the idea that blacks were dirty and aggressive from American films and from our experience with black soldiers. My very first day in America, I was afraid to go outside because of the dangerous blacks."

There is also a difference in cultural style. Koreans tend to shy away from direct eye contact as a sign of impoliteness, and they are not given to smiling at customers. Avoiding physical contact with men, Korean female cashiers may drop change on the counter. Self-exploitative long hours, lack of sleep, and imperfect English also make for brusqueness. At a meeting with blacks, a leader of the Korean Produce Association searched for commonalities—"Our Chang music is like your soul music: it comes from the heart. Like African Americans, we were enslaved"—but added, "We Koreans have great strength of endurance. We don't express our joy or laugh easily or share agonies."

At issue here are rival notions of natural customer-merchant relations. Caribbeans, used to the West Indian market economy, like to bargain. They take their mangoes to the register and offer less than the price, or pluck a grape and test the sweetness of the bunch. This sort of thing drives the merchants crazy. Some consider it tantamount to stealing. West Indians along Church Avenue tell you, "We never had these problems with the Jews!" and despite the improbable nostalgia, the lament has substance. The *Korea Times*, aware that black grievances are more than racist fabrications, has taken to warning merchants not to put profit above all else.

Finally, blacks resent the presumption that they are all shoplifters. For proud immigrants in this working-class neighborhood, many of whom rebuke what they

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Garvey's Ghosts

NEW YORK CITY

The issue of black leadership was at the center of the city's racial crisis from the start. It emerged first in a sharp exchange between David Dinkins and black activist C. Vernon Mason. On the eve of the Bensonhurst verdicts, which were widely expected to favor two whites accused of murdering a black teenager, the city's first black mayor defended the jury system. He also denounced the small band of blacks who were picketing Korean grocery stores in Flatbush. "I oppose all bigotry against anyone, anywhere," he said. "I abhor it. I denounce it, and I'll do anything . . . to prevent it."

The next afternoon, as more than 800 blacks gathered in Brooklyn to march through Bensonhurst and Flatbush, Mason warmed up the crowd. "I could not believe what this Negro said last night!" he shouted, using the most contemptuous name one African American can call another today. "It was all I could do to prevent myself from breaking the TV!" The assembled marchers chanted, "Judas! Judas!" as Mason called the mayor "a lover of white people." "Last night," he continued, "[Dinkins] bashed black people. He ain't got no African left in him. He's got too many yarmulkes on his head." The question taking shape was stark: Which of these men speaks for most black New Yorkers?

The next few days sharpened the question. The switchboard at WLIB, the city's premier black radio station, lit up with calls from listeners denouncing the mayor. The Flatbush boycotters defiantly maintained their vigil. And though a number of blacks responded to Dinkins's comments by shopping in the Korean stores, they too were mercilessly taunted as "Negroes" and "Uncle Toms." One black high school teacher who brought his class to cross the picket line reported that his life had been threatened. Denounced in the black press as a "spoiler" and a "pawn" of whites, he asked to be transferred to a school as far away as possible from the boycotters. For all Dinkins's campaign promises to heal the city's racial wounds, the mayor now seemed powerless in the face of threatened riots. On the night of the second Bensonhurst verdict, the Rev. Al Sharpton told a crowd: "We are not going to take this anymore. We are going to move this city like it has never been moved before." The crowd's answer: "What do we want? *War!*"

White New Yorkers had no idea how seriously to take such threats. What kind of following, they asked themselves, did Sharpton command in the black neighborhoods of the city? And who in the end was going to carry the day—the well-spoken mayor or the boycotters with bullhorns? Dinkins reassured the public: "Most people do not agree with Sharpton, period." Most New Yorkers wanted to believe him; they too were rooting for the handful of ordinary people who every day made token purchases from the Koreans. And yet there was something in the air that made it hard to believe that even a presence like Sharpton, with his shoulder-length pompadour, was only the creation of a hyperactive media.

Day by day, the troubling evidence mounted, suggesting that the street activists spoke for something deeper in the black community. One of the first signs came from Major Owens, a four-term congressman from Brooklyn and a supporter of the mayor. He announced that the boycotters had a legitimate grievance against "these outsiders, be they Korean or Asians or white, [who] come to the main streets of our neighborhoods to make money."

Next came the evidence from the tabloids' black and Hispanic columnists, often seen as spokesmen for many New York blacks. One by one they followed Owens, writing about "legitimate complaints" and "just how much trouble the mayor has with his base." The talk shows on WLIB were predictably militant, but so were the calls to the mainstream media: "I like Sharpton because he makes whites squirm," said one caller on the city-owned AM radio station. Soon even Dinkins was backtracking slightly: "I'm confident," he said, "that [the controversy] is a legitimate dispute. . . . It's important to remember that a picket is as American as apple pie." At the least, it seemed that white New Yorkers had underestimated the power of the epithets "Negro" and "Uncle Tom."

The contrast between Dinkins and Sharpton—the integrationist and the nationalist—was not, of course, new in the black community. Some black leaders, and some parts of the black community, have always seen their best hope in entering the mainstream and in forming political coalitions with whites. Others, who have called themselves separatists or nationalists or simply "race men," believe that it is a mistake to trust whites. Without hope of any real racial harmony, they look instead to a black life apart—among other blacks and in black institutions, building "a nation within a nation."

Both integration and nationalism have gone in and out of fashion in the black community, depending largely on the racial climate in the country at large. Integrationism has thrived in periods such as the 1860s, 1910s, and 1950s, when blacks felt that white society was opening to them; separatism flourishes when times are bad. Neither strain ever disappears entirely, and it has always been strangely difficult to assess the strength of either view.

Soundings of black attitudes in the late 1960s, for instance, reveal a typically muddled picture. A Harris poll conducted for *Newsweek* in 1969, when most people thought the Black Power movement was at its peak, showed that Martin Luther King and the NAACP were favorably regarded by 95 percent and 76 percent, respectively. Yet, as anyone who was alive then can remember, these striking numbers did not exactly catch the mood—a climate in which "moderate" was more or less a dirty word and even the most conciliatory leaders felt compelled to denounce gradualism and compromise. Then, as today, the nationalists had a hold on the community that more mainstream leaders ignored at their peril.

New York City has always been fertile ground for black nationalism. Marcus Garvey made his headquarters here in the 1920s, appealing to the hopelessness of the city's poorest blacks. The charismatic Garvey, who dressed in military regalia and surrounded himself with quasi-religious pomp, eschewed all hope of racial harmony and urged Harlemites to build their own businesses. The fact that his own Black Star shipping line collapsed amid fraud charges did little to dampen the strong nationalist feelings he had aroused.

Adam Clayton Powell tapped directly into this current when he took over a Harlem pulpit in the 1930s. Powell was not exactly a separatist, of course: he spent most of his life working within the system, in Congress. Yet he too made use of the

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nationalist's chemistry, appealing to black bitterness and to the communal need for a symbol of defiant pride. Like both Garvey and Sharpton, Powell played to age-old ghetto grievances about ethnic shop-owners and brutal police. But the real key to his popularity was his high style and naughty manner: his flamboyant womanizing and sloppy tax habits. Although this eventually got him into trouble in Congress, it only added to his stature in Harlem, where people thrilled to the idea of a black man who could thumb his nose at whites.

But perhaps the best clues about the appeal of the nationalists date from the early 1960s, when Malcolm X was making his first waves in Harlem. Malcolm's themes—the need for black businesses, black self-help, a blanket denunciation of whites—were standard nationalist fare. What Malcolm added was yet a new sort of pride: not the pride of regalia or naughty charm, but a far harder, more authentic kind. Even the most mainstream blacks recall the unforgettable experience of hearing Malcolm for the first time. "Malcolm says things you or I would not say," one galvanized NAACP official told a fellow black. "When he talks about the white man, even those of us who are repelled by his philosophy secretly cheer a little outside ourselves, because Malcolm X really does tell 'em and we know he frightens the white man. We clap."

What Malcolm proved—and the reason he so frightened whites—is that there is a little bit of the nationalist in every black. Like all separatists, Sharpton knows that his most ardent followers will be found among the poor. The persistence of the underclass, the spreading drug crisis, an ever-growing sense of racial isolation: these are not the kinds of problems that politicians like David Dinkins can solve—and militants lose no time in capitalizing on that. But the nationalists' appeal is not limited to black have-nots. As Louis Farrakhan and Gus Savage show, the nationalists' hold has not waned significantly even as the black middle class has more than tripled in size since 1960.

Middle-class nationalism is somewhat different than the ghetto variety: less literal, less concrete in its demands, less likely to give rise to action—more like religion and less like politics. Atlanta politician Michael Lomax, a founder of the Democratic Leadership Council, describes it this way: "The vast majority of African Americans live lives that contradict what Farrakhan is saying. Yet what he says has a strong emotional and psychological appeal. Many blacks who do not live by it are willing to listen and say, 'Amen.' " This is why the nationalist rhetoric is still able to trump—and skew—even the core beliefs of mainstream leaders. Besides, even more than poor blacks, the middle class is vulnerable to the painful taunt of "Uncle Tom."

Dinkins is a classic product of the black middle class. A hardworking former Marine and cautious political regular, he is a die-hard integrationist. But he also knows full well the power of middle-class nationalism—and he knows that he will not succeed unless he can defeat or co-opt that power. In one sense, Dinkins is lucky: Sharpton's buffoonery seems finally to be catching up with him, revealing him as little more than a parody of Harlem's great nationalists. Even after ten days of high racial tension, the *Daily News* found that Dinkins held the support of 87 percent of New York blacks, while only 30 percent backed the Flatbush boycott.

AL SHARPTON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But Dinkins knows as well as anyone that the numbers can be misleading. He understands that he is up against more than Sharpton. That is why he too has to talk so much about racism and why he had to say that there might be something legitimate about the Korean boycott. He knows that to dismiss these concerns would alienate not just Sharpton's tiny following, but a little part of every New York black. Of course, Dinkins also belittles Sharpton, blaming his success on the sensationalist media. To a degree, he's right: the New York press did make too much of one man's antics. Yet even if the media paid no attention to them, neither Sharpton nor Farrakhan would simply fade away. The appeal of the "race man" is still a fact of American life—and it will not be banished easily with either denunciations or neglect.

TAMAR JACOBY

Tamar Jacoby, an Alicia Patterson fellow, is writing a book about race.

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see as the slothful ways of poor American blacks, the scrutiny of merchants is insulting. The problem is that Flatbush merchants do face endemic pilfering. The Church Avenue subway stop has been the scene of numerous muggings, and wolf packs recurrently terrorize the riders of the nearby D line. So merchants frequently resort to generalized suspicion. "How do we know which ones are going to steal?" asks a merchant. "We have to watch everybody."

Some merchants simply charge off theft. One explains, "The moment you make an issue of it, they start screaming, 'You racist.' They make everything racial. You just try to get them out of the store." The sad truth is that street realpolitik does work; a merchant who delivers only a mild rebuke will suffer incursions again. When Korean merchants try to open bags or stop customers, they touch a black sensitivity to the quick. Moreover, a Brooklyn minister observes, most incidents involve Korean men and black women. "We are supersensitized to that [disrespectful] attitude toward our women. . . . Black women have been the doormat of the men of every race in the world."

Economic dependency also charges merchant-customer relations. Historically, African Americans have shown their resentment of commercial outsiders by looting Jewish businesses during riots and by using the imagery of parasitic bloodsuckers. The Korean influx into black communities gave new life to this plaint. In 1981 the black *Amsterdam News* described the black merchants' response to "Koreans Dash for Harlem Cash" as "anti-Korean hysteria." In past blow-ups, Koreans have had to agree to repatriate profits in the community, to share entrepreneurial skills, and to donate money to community organizations. While some Flatbush boycott leaders speak of punishing "particular merchants," not all are so circumspect. Boycott rhetoric has brimmed with cries to buy black and to expel ethnic foreigners. A flyer for the Afrikan People's Farmers Market states, "We must control our money, what we buy and when, when we produce for them and when we don't. . . . No longer are we forced to shop with people who do not look like us."

Korean success generates other feelings. "The Koreans are claiming buildings we've dreamed of, that we've longed for, for years." Many feel that blacks once again are being denied their place in the ethnic queue by newcomers who are leaping over them. One boycott leader said that suddenly the Koreans "are everywhere. They are given money to establish themselves. How can poor people like that just come to this country and do that unless they have been given a fund? There's no one doing that for black people." In fact, the start-up capital for a grocery store is typically less than $10,000, and banks and the government are rarely its source. Koreans get capital from relatives, from their own labor and self-denial, and from mutual savings associations. They extract their profit from family labor and contrast their ferocious work ethic—for years many work twelve to sixteen hours a day, six or seven days a week—with the relaxed attitudes of blacks. A *New York Post* editorial, "Scapegoating New York's Koreans," argued that the Korean formula of hard work and loyal families "is a path open to any group that wants to follow it."

The *Post* implied what it did not say: blacks fail to travel that path. A cop in front of the boycott line sneers, "Great! They'll close the fucking store down. And you know what will replace it? A crackhouse." At a black-Korean consciousness-raising session, the most moderate blacks bristled at the phrase "hard-working Koreans," and replied, "We work hard too!" Equally problematic is the "you" in "Why can't you make it?" The underclass? West Indians? Blacks in general? West Indian homeowners who have reclaimed entire neighborhoods are also vindicating the old immigrant formula. Without hardworking Caribbean baby sitters, many white professionals could not work so hard either.

This trading of charges contains an agonizing argument about the relevance of immigrant precedents for black advancement. In truth, the Korean migrants have come from relatively middle-class backgrounds, and have brought class and organizational advantages that few others can boast. That still does not trump the implication of a black caller's question on a talk show on the black radio station WLIB: Why can't blacks fashion networks of mutual lending like the Koreans? On a show usually alert for any attempt to shift blame from white racism onto blacks themselves, this prompted the query, What if blacks swore off drugs for a day?

The call for blacks to amass capital by abstaining from cocaine underscores the truth embraced by those Muslims who boycott crackhouses rather than Korean grocers: racism is not the only obstacle to black progress. No matter how many Bensonhurst badasses remain in New York City, there is capital in the ghetto that could be mobilized for productive ends. A hundred pilgrimages to the grave of Malcolm X will not dispel this fact. If the goal of African Americans is empowerment, and not the rhetoric of empowerment, they cannot forever view themselves as the objects of external forces.

Slight, crime, and envy helped turn a minor scrap into something larger, but they don't explain the particular course of the boycott. Similar incidents have led to negotiated settlements. The grocers and Korean and black leaders took part in sessions arranged by the borough president to enhance mutual sensitivity. Yet boycott leaders, rejecting every overture, reduced all complexity to the non-negotiable issue of racist disrespect. To understand this, we need to look at the forces that gained ascendancy on Church Avenue and gave the boycott its edge of ethnocentric menace.

The boycott initially engaged the energy of diverse activists: community organizers, dissident local politicians with links to the community board and other Brooklyn elected officials, Muslims from the UMMA group, and mainstream Haitian religious and civic leaders. These forces reflect the growing power of Afro-

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Caribbean political assertion, which ranges from ethnic politics to racialist appeals. (A relic of its ethnic past, Jewish state senator Marty Markowitz represents the predominantly black area. In the past, Maurice Gumbs campaigned against him in calypso joints on the slogan, "Massa Day Done.")

But from the start, more alienated and nationalistic forces—both within and without the community—began to overshadow the eclectic elements among the boycott leadership. Fewer than two dozen people, many with strong nationalist sentiments, filled the two main boycott organizations. Death threats silenced a number of Haitian and Caribbean local leaders who disavowed racist rhetoric. When the Flatbush Coalition called in black activist Sonny Carson, other moderates departed.

Carson's presence galvanized the cry of "outside agitators." Church Avenue was a reprise of his previous efforts to shut down Korean grocers, notably in 1988 in Bedford-Stuyvesant. In both cases there were allegations of extortion, and the boycott line was staffed by his colleagues in the December 12th Movement, a collection of black militants who mobilize frenetic "Days of Outrage," including one in 1989 in which protesters storming the Brooklyn Bridge injured forty-four cops in a shower of bricks and rocks. As a boycott impresario, Carson performed the same raucous activism that marked his rise from street tough to the head of Brooklyn CORE during the New York City school wars of 1968, when his florid anti-Semitism rankled the teachers' union. After a hiatus that included a prison term for kidnapping, in the mid-1980s Carson again took up his craft of racial provocation. When it was revealed that the Dinkins campaign, much to its embarrassment, had paid Carson $9,500 for a phantom get-out-the-vote drive, perhaps to keep the enragees quiet, Carson denied the old charge of anti-Semitism: "I am anti-white."

Despite the cry of African unity, the boycott became the work of a small, if diverse, vanguard that held a neighborhood captive to its torrid brand of resentment politics. A Flatbush Frontline Collective member seethed at this appraisal. "How would we look, African people hating people on account of their race?" Boycotters stress they have targeted only two Korean stores; within a few blocks, a half-dozen Korean stores operate unmolested. But racist thuggery has been more than an incidental aberration. Protesters have issued death threats, including the promise of a Soweto necklace of tires and gasoline. Some boycotters deterred shoppers with retaliatory threats of "We'll get you." They screech at the few blacks who have dared cross the line, "monkeys," "Uncle Toms," "motherfuckers," and, with pointed contempt, "Negroes." And they have filled the air with anti-Asian epithets. Without the imprecation and intimidation, the boycott would have collapsed long ago.

The Koreans continued to receive sub-rosa support from some black customers. Interviewed away from the protesters, residents asserted, "They've been punished enough"; "We should start our own businesses, don't drive others out of business"; and "Those boycotters are lowlifes—why don't they get a job?" A Caribbean woman reflected, "Maybe the Koreans in that store are a little rough, and their manners are coarse, but there is no pattern of disrespect. The Koreans are just hardworking people. You can't go into people's stores without paying. It's not fair what they are doing to them."

Boycott leaders created a permanent Day of Outrage on Church Avenue. Whether cynically or in earnest, they used the emotive issue of the alleged beating to expand the market for black power politics. From the jump-off point of merchant politesse, their diatribes moved in a widening spiral: gliding from the emotive image of the abused Haitian woman to a diffuse sense of abused black people; dissolving the identity of the evil merchant-perpetrator in a generalized nefarious Korean and white "they"; and eliding the demand for justice for Jiselaine and the search for black power. One leader rambled:

> Make sure these Korean racists leave our community for good. . . . Our tax monies are going to protect these racists who beat up our women. . . . Wake up, black people. It's time for black people to control their own community. . . . Other ethnic groups come into black communities and exploiting people, it's happening in Harlem, it's happening in Flatbush, in Crown Heights, everywhere there are black people. . . . We are saying, no more savage racists in our community. They are sucking out the people's sweat. . . . They paint us as savages, but they caused the destruction of the entire Indian race.

Before one rally, loudspeakers broadcast a Malcolm X speech on revolution. Carson told the crowd, "Get ready for the Day of Outrage against racism. All the hot days are ahead. Racism lives in this country. Black power. Black power. Let's kick their ass." Some boycott activists, in court to challenge a restraining order, refused to stand when the judge entered and hissed rulings they opposed. Carson lashed out at the judge, "You are a racist. A black woman was attacked! We won't take your crap." When court officers tried to remove Carson, his supporters prepared to intercede. He took them to the brink, then pulled them back with a decision to leave peacefully. Outside, behind an African liberation flag, they chanted, "We will be in the streets every day, freedom or death!"

Carson claims that "the inheritors of that system [of slavery and segregation] are imposing the same exploitation on us." Black men, he argues, are the targets of genocidal schemes—including black-on-black crime and crack—"to eliminate black men. We are an endangered species." Has there been any progress? I ask him. Arsenio Hall, David Dinkins, and Jesse Jackson, he replies, are part of a "brilliant plan to convince blacks they can get a piece of the pie."

Carson reiterates the Malcolm X prescription, "We work for the liberation of our people by any means

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possible," and cites his adage about white fear of a black man with a knife in the dark. He heralds the "savagery" of black men; he wants "to unshackle their balls," to save blacks from a civilizing process that will "make faggots of them" in a moral and political sense, that will "refine and educate" the blackness and outrage right out of them. He lauds the rising spirit of fighting back that he discerns in the new generation. "The [young] brothers gave a good account of themselves" during the Day of Outrage. As he says, "My ancestors weren't immigrants: I've inherited a chip on my shoulder."

The return of Sonny Carson to public life marks a larger revival during the Koch years of a black radicalism whose genealogy goes back to 1960s street-corner nationalism. It retains not only the demands for black power but also its more demonic features, albeit in modulated form: the conviction of white malevolence, the defiant braggadocio and cult of "badness," predictions of racial apocalypse, accusations of "traitor" and "Negro," and the agenda of separatism. It is a retrograde force, full of nihilistic contradictions. Professing love of African people, it bullies and harms them. It speaks of empowerment but harps on the status of blacks as hapless victims and denies them any responsibility for ghetto incivility. Among blacks and whites alike, it calls forth the racism that it constantly demonizes.

This politics is hardly representative of black opinion and claims no mass base; nor is it confined to a few protesters on Church Avenue. It exists in Farrakhan's screeds, in the music of Public Enemy and other political rappers, and in the cult of melanin superiority. It pours out over the airwaves of black talk radio: in anti-Semitic resentment, in preachments "to know who the enemy is," in the widespread belief that whites raped the Central Park jogger, in cavalier statements that Attorney General Robert Abrams is a "well-known enemy of African People," in the conviction that "we're here in apartheid now."

Most vividly, it pervades the antics of media mesmerists like the Rev. Al Sharpton—who inflamed racial paranoia and Tawana Brawley's suffering with the hoax that white men had raped her—and activist lawyers C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox. At the Slave Theater in Bedford-Stuyvesant, after Dinkins called for racial healing, Mason pronounced him "a Negro bastard," "Judas," and a "lover of white people." "He ain't got no Africanism in him at all." To enthusiastic applause, Mason opined that "he's got too many yarmulkes on his head." In an emotive session on WLIB, Sharpton called for a convocation of "Africans only, that want justice only. . . . These whites must learn in this town that they going to pay when they put their hands on African people." Maddox emphasizes, "We are at war. . . . We must get out into the streets and we must shake these people upside down. We must continue to invade Bensonhurst time and time and time again."

To declaim against this cathartic form of black politics, as Koch's hectoring made clear, affords certain cathartic pleasures of its own. But it ignores the realities that nourish the frenzy: the calamity of the underclass, federal indifference to the black plight, a string of killings of black people by police and white ethnic mobs. In response, many offer nonsense. As if New York now is the same as Selma in 1965, *Do The Right Thing* gave the alternatives of nonviolence and striking back; neither addresses the trials of broken families, crack and crime, poverty. Similarly, it saddens that Yusuf Hawkins's father invited Farrakhan to speak at Yusuf's funeral, even as one sympathizes with his skepticism about white benevolence. How can you explain to Diane Hawkins, Yusuf's mother, the code of silence that permits Keith Mondello's sidekicks, who suffer from "Bensonhurst amnesia," to receive local adulation as "stand-up guys," or the smiles of their supporters chanting, "Do the White Thing" and "Yusuf, useless, Yusuf, useless"?

No amount of understanding can diminish the need to confront this volatile strain in black political life. Here the silence of black leaders has been troublesome. Whether out of fear of being branded a traitor or racial loyalty that keeps spats "in the family," they have not vigorously countered racial delusion. Black leaders should act against it, not to achieve peace at the expense of justice, but because a politics of retributive despair will bring neither.

Perhaps, as Dinkins suggested, a shouting match with Sharpton and his ilk inflates their importance and maintains the media circus on which they feed. Still, there is a midpoint between diffidence and stridency, and Dinkins has a rare opportunity to define it. A black man who understands the pain of his people, he is a dignified practitioner of racial coalition. His vision of the gorgeous mosaic affirms the mutual respect that is a requisite of the good society. His belated healing speech made clear that he is not a mayor for blacks but the mayor of the entire city. And he reassured Bensonhurst in a way Koch never reassured black New York. "All of Bensonhurst did not commit this crime; rather, a few people committed this crime in Bensonhurst." One should not dismiss the significance of such Family-of-Man pieties. Against the backdrop of white backlash, they provide the rhetorical condition for liberal renewal. Within the context of black politics, they courageously instruct in the civic culture needed to further black liberation.

The passions of the boycott and Bensonhurst will likely subside, but blacks will experience other disappointments as Dinkins slashes the budget deficit and protects the ratings of the city's bonds. Some will be dismayed that having one of their own as mayor does not make an immediate difference in their lives. These dashed expectations may generate hungers that the equivocations of governing will not satisfy. Demagogues will seek to minister to those afflictions. At that moment, Dinkins again will have the opportunity, if only he will seize it, to speak out for a democratic politics. •

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What the new Europe will look like.

THE RISE OF THE EUROPEAN SUPERPOWER

By Ronald Steel

Let us, for a moment, wax sentimental about the cold war. Expensive and often irrational as it was, it did at least provide a few benefits. Among these were a Europe that was politically stable for the first time in this century, a German state that neither dominated nor threatened its neighbors, and an extraordinary degree of American influence over the richest and most populous nations of the continent. The superpowers made the big decisions about war, peace, and diplomacy; they negotiated with each other not as members of a team, but as franchise owners. Our alliance, NATO, was of course voluntary and democratic, while that of the Soviets, the Warsaw Pact, was enforced by the Red army. But despite these great differences it was still accurate to speak of "our" Europe and "their" Europe.

That is gone. The passing of the cold war means not only a truce, or even entente, between the "superpowers" (the very phrase now sounds dated and self-promoting), but the demise of a political order run from Washington and Moscow. Today we, like the Soviets, find ourselves increasingly confined to the sidelines as Europe organizes and defines itself. From the cocoon of the cold war a new Europe is metamorphosing into a form we cannot easily predict or control.

As the cold war power blocs crumble, the structures that delineate them—NATO and the Warsaw Pact—are being drained of meaning. Although the hard-currency nationalists of Eastern Europe currently find it imprudent to denounce the Pact formally, they see it only as a temporary inconvenience pending the early departure of Soviet soldiers. The Kremlin itself undercut the meaning of the Pact when it put a higher priority on Western loans and investments than on policing resentful satellites. The Pact has become an embarrassing reminder of Moscow's weakness rather than its strength, and it remains formally intact only because an imminent demise seems more threatening to European stability than a lingering atrophy. For the Kremlin a continued military presence in Eastern Europe offers perhaps the only way of sustaining a political presence.

In a sense this could be said of the United States and NATO as well. The Atlantic alliance, after all, has been the instrument by which the United States exerted political influence over Europe. Atlanticism, the organizing principle of U.S. postwar policy toward Europe, was built on Europe's dependence. From the start NATO, the linchpin of Atlanticism, was seen as the instrument by which the United States, with Europe's consent and assistance, would provide for the protection of its allies. In so doing, Washington also retained ultimate direction of Europe's defense and diplomacy. This is the system that such European nationalists as French President Charles de Gaulle inveighed against in the 1960s and labeled "hegemony." But it also served Europe's interest, for it provided a relatively cheap defense. Atlanticism worked so long as Europe's division seemed insurmountable, Soviet intransigence eternal, and European dependency inescapable.

As these conditions have eroded, so has Atlanticism. With the Soviet Union transformed from an "evil empire" into an impoverished and confused supplicant, American protection has become less important to Europeans. Needing us less, they are no longer so accommodating to our wishes. Our place in Europe's consciousness is shrinking. As we assume our new role as kibitzers at the political and economic reorganization of Europe, we find ourselves immersed, however regretfully, in a post-Atlantic world.

Although the passing of the old order relieves the fear—always exaggerated—of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, it also unleashes problems repressed by the struggle of the giants. The cold war may be over, but—as illustrated by an upcoming Council on Foreign Relations study, *Sea-Changes in American Foreign Policy*—the competition of nations and the quest for power are not.

First of the post-cold war issues is the emergence of a Europe that will be a serious economic and ultimately political competitor. Already the European Community is a larger market than the United States, its industries often more productive, and most of its people at least as prosperous as Americans. In the past we often used Western Europe's military dependency as a lever to gain economic or political concessions. But even during the last decade this had become increasingly difficult, and after the creation of a single European market in 1992 our leverage will sharply decline. Tomorrow's Europe may speak in one voice or in several, but its accent will not be American.

Second, it has become unavoidably clear that European nationalism, especially in the East, is growing.

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Together we and the Soviets imposed an unnatural calm upon Europe. Peoples who had been at one another's throats for centuries lived together in peace, if not in harmony. But the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the removal of the fear of Soviet intervention have allowed long-suppressed resentments and ambitions to burst forth. Even national frontiers are once again being called into question. For all the justifiable euphoria that has greeted the downfall of Stalinist dictatorships, the fact remains that most of these states have been frozen in an authoritarian mold for at least four decades, cut off from the forces of democratization and modernization that have transformed the rest of the continent. Some might well revert to previous forms of right-wing authoritarianism and militarism. All will probably be plagued by mass unemployment, inequality, and social unrest as they try to adjust to the pitiless logic of the market. The very cohesion of some of these states is already being threatened by ethnic and regional resentments. Now that the Soviet Union has chosen cooperation with its neighbors over subjugation and defiance, the great task for European statesmen will be that of absorbing into a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Western Europe a part of the continent that has known none of these virtues and may have great difficulty acquiring them.

Third, the end of the cold war means the emergence of that enduring issue of modern European history: the German Question. The Atlantic alliance was brought into being not only to reduce temptations to a marauding Soviet bear and wrap the Europeans in an American-dominated trading system, but also to reassure Europeans that the Germans would be restrained by a net of embraces and mutual obligations. In time Pentagon planners sought German bases for the forward deployment of American troops and planes against the Soviets, and German youth for a half-million man army to counter the Red army in the "other" Germany. NATO gradually became transformed into what is essentially a U.S.-German alliance. For the other Europeans, wary of German power, the presence of a large American army on German soil was reassuring. And for the Soviets NATO provided an excuse for their own occupation of Eastern Europe. Thus the alliance served everyone's purposes.

The Germans too benefited from their defense arrangements under NATO. They gained protection from the Soviets, U.S. assistance to rebuild their economy, reconciliation with their Western neighbors, sanction for rearmament only a few years after their war of aggression, and leverage, on that distant day when the Soviet hold on the eastern German lands loosened, for the ultimate unification of Germans under a single flag. It was only by unflinching allegiance to the West and the incorporation of the Federal Republic into Western military and economic institutions that the ending of Germany's partition and her reconciliation with the East was one day brought about.

The German Question—how to find a place for a unified Germany in a divided Europe—returned in full force with the sudden collapse of the regime in East Berlin. For a short time after the Wall crumbled, diplomats and politicians across Europe nourished the hope that two democratic German states might exist side by side for years in tranquil cohabitation. But that assumption was shattered by the flight across the frontier by those who wanted to be as free and as rich as their fellow Germans in the West. What is striking is how suddenly the seemingly imposing barriers to German unification fell. Soviet security interests, fear on the part of Germany's neighbors, even anxieties in the Federal Republic over the costs and unknown consequences of pell-mell unification—none of this stood in the way. Nor did the real concerns of the supposed "superpowers," who found themselves confined to the wings, where they mumbled admonitions about "undue haste." The Soviets, playing from a weak hand, seem to have accepted the inevitable, though they demand respect for the proprieties. Washington, unwilling to impose barriers to unification and seemingly oblivious to its own sharply diminished political influence in Europe, publicly declares that all is for the best.

Perhaps it is, but with a unified Germany we will be living in a very different world. Whereas the Federal Republic looked west to North America and the Common Market, the new Germany will also look east, where it has no serious economic or political competition. As unification proceeds, we are likely to witness the emergence of what was once called Mitteleuropa: an Eastern Europe dominated economically, culturally, and politically by the powerhouse of Germany. Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary will become the low-wage "Third World" workshops for the German industrial machine.

In a German-dominated Eastern Europe there would be a special place for the Soviet Union. But the old roles would be reversed. Instead of a Soviet military colossus hanging over Europe and threatening to engulf it, there would be the German industrial machine driving the economies to the east. The Soviet role in this constellation would be to serve as a source of labor, raw materials, agricultural products, and unsophisticated manufactured goods. As an economic junior partner the USSR, like any semideveloped country, would benefit from German know-how and investment. In the new power equation the Soviet Union would be demoted from the status of "superpower" to that of "troubled giant," beset by ethnic tensions and political instability. The relationship between the USSR and Germany would be reversed: more like it was before 1941, or even 1914, than after 1945.

Fourth, how will the Soviet Union fit into the new Europe? Cold war politics focused exclusively on the fear of Russian expansion. The problem now is one of Russian implosion, rather than explosion. If the Gorbachev experiment fails, the government could be seized by xenophobic Great Russian nationalists who would terrify ethnic minorities and

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menace their neighbors in the traditions of an ancient Russian imperialism. Or, as the non-Russian republics try to secede, the country could collapse into anarchy succeeded by military dictatorship. This would not resurrect the old alliances, but it would imperil the effort to achieve a peaceful European balance, and it would push the emerging European community in a military direction. This would enhance the role of Germany and perhaps even raise the issue of its nuclear status.

During the worst days of the cold war the U.S.-Soviet relationship was described as that of two scorpions in a bottle, ready to sting each other in a suicidal spasm. Today they are more like two dogs on a chain: neither can move very far without the help of the other. The Soviets need us to ease their transition into the world of the marketplace and to allay their security anxieties. We need them to play a responsible role in the new European power balance. It is not in our interest for their government to be seized by resentful generals or religious fanatics, or to collapse into civil war. We need a Soviet Union that will be able to keep internal order, be responsible in the world community, and remain open to pluralism and democracy. We will have to start thinking about the Soviet Union as we did about Germany and Japan after World War II. We helped bring prosperity to these countries to ensure our own; we wanted them to be strong to restrain the expansionist power of the day—the USSR. By the same logic, a stable global order today requires a reasonably strong and prosperous Soviet Union.

A weak Soviet state means that the levers of power in tomorrow's Europe will be wielded by the strongest nation on the Continent: Germany. It is the powerhouse, the centerpiece, and the unifying force of a wider Europe. Germany's legitimate interests must be carefully balanced with those of its neighbors. It is more than an understatement to say that this has not been easy to achieve in the past. Each time that Germany tried to unify Europe by force it was necessary to bring Russia and America into the equation to restore the balance. After four decades of cold war, we are now returning to the familiar conditions of an earlier period. Europe cannot be built without a strong Germany, but a stable European structure requires that German power be contained.

The efforts to redefine, reformulate, and restructure NATO are designed to keep the United States in Europe and thereby balance both a rising Germany and a declining Soviet Union. Therefore NATO has the blessing of most Europeans and of the Soviets as well. The Soviets have now come around to accepting, through a face-saving formula, the participation of a united Germany in NATO. But the importance of this should not be exaggerated. As American troops depart and joint diplomatic ventures with Moscow proliferate, the alliance itself will change. Today, as the Germans focus on the problems of unification, they remain docile passengers in the American-steered NATO boat. Tomorrow they will quite naturally demand a place on the bridge. Will the United States then be as keen about participating in an alliance it no longer controls?

For this reason Soviet anxieties about incorporating all of Germany into NATO are not totally misplaced. The Soviets understand that although the Germans may play host to token contingents of foreign armies for a limited time, they are unlikely to allow their political freedom of action to be seriously inhibited. They propose German neutrality in part because it spares them the humiliation of seeing their former satellite swallowed up by the rival alliance. But this is an even worse alternative for them because it also poses no restraints on the power they fear.

A quarter century ago de Gaulle envisaged a self-reliant Europe stretching "from the Atlantic to the Urals." At that time, in the heyday of Atlanticism and of our notions of omnipotence, such a concept was deemed fanciful and anti-American. But today, with our own social and economic problems beginning to take precedence in our politics over lingering cold war anxieties, the notion of a Europe responsible for its own security and stability is essential. It provides the best hope for extricating us from involvements that strain our resources, for cementing an emerging European confederation, and for enveloping Germany in a structure it cannot dominate but is not threatening to it.

The wider trans-Atlantic, trans-Ural entity can be called any number of things: a European Defense Community, a Concert of Europe, even NATO. Traditionalists will complain that an alliance without a specific enemy is doomed to failure. Perhaps it will be. But the problem with trying to perpetuate NATO along its current lines is that the Soviet Union is not a sufficiently persuasive enemy. And as U.S. involvement wanes, such an alliance increasingly will be dominated by Germany. Thus the survival of NATO must be viewed not as a long-term policy but a short-term expedient.

We have interests in Europe, for Europe, and in some cases against Europe. Having blessed and aided the creation of the European Community, we could become a victim of its success. This means that we must unsentimentally act upon our own wider interests and think of Europe not as a dependency or even as an ally, but as a security partner, an economic competitor, and in some senses as a rival. We need a Europe that is peaceful, prosperous, and a menace neither to itself nor to others—a Europe that will not return to the historical patterns of ethnic violence and civil war that triggered global conflagrations. Europe is in the process of becoming something different from what it has been during the past four decades: perhaps something more open and inspiring, though also perhaps not so totally different from the caldron of ambitions and resentments that it once was. To say that the cold war is over is to celebrate the end of an obsession, and thus a liberation. But it is also to recognize that Europe, with all its promise for good, and all its potential for evil, has slipped from the control of others and is again pursuing the siren calls of its destiny. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Her Life and Times

At first Sandra Bernhard is hard to take, but before long, she's worth it. She is the stand-up comedian and singer who played one of Jerry Lewis's abductors in *The King of Comedy* (1983), and I confess that I felt relieved at the end of that picture when Jerry, after he was freed, slapped her. Not long ago Bernhard did a one-woman show in New York, and I managed to abstain. Then came a film built around that show—which apparently is well known on the Coast—and I went reluctantly. But I also left reluctantly. And I went again.

It's called **Without *You* I'm Nothing** (M.C.E.G.), and it begins with a man in eighteenth-century costume playing Bach on a spinet. Then the camera pans to a modern black woman who picks up the piece on a piano. Then we're in Bernhard's dressing room. She snips at her hair for a while, then turns to the camera and speaks.

This opening talk helps to establish a complex texture. Much of it is based on her looks, so there's no point in mincing words. She is singularly non-beautiful. Yet in these opening remarks, she addresses us like a raving beauty admitting us to her toilet. (The theme recurs: later on, she talks about her "huge breasts," which she doesn't have.) All this is much more than the early Phyllis Diller mocking her looks or the Fanny Brice who capitalized on homey homeliness, as did her impersonator, Barbra Streisand.

Bernhard, we soon see, is not after the easy laughs of self-mockery, not even as a way of ingratiating herself with the non-beauties in her audience. She is, first, saying something about star adulation as it is still promulgated in these hip days that pretend to be far above '30s fan magazines. But fundamentally, she is expressing her confidence that she is attractive; that once we have spent some time with her and have *listened* to her, her broad features and large mouth and gap-toothed smile will merely become part of the woman who engages us. She wins.

Because she is talented—she really can sing and mime—and she is intelligent. Her material, which she wrote with the director, John Boskovich, is satirical of vogues, social and political attitudes, clichés of action and diction between men and women, show-biz styles of the last three decades. But her satire is less put-down than somewhat regretful memory. She is not a tourist flying over a landscape: she is a survivor who understands the foolishness of a lot of American guff and is nonetheless an inhabitant. (I don't remotely begin to equate the two, but I admit to a thought of Thomas Pynchon.)

Bernhard performs a series of numbers in a small club patronized by well-dressed blacks. They are completely bored, though quiet, and she keeps behaving as if they were loving her (mouthing the words "thank you" as she lifts her arms at the conclusion of a number, though absolutely no one is applauding). Since all this is designed by Bernhard, it gives her satire an even keener edge.

Her numbers are punctuated with film inserts that do and do not relate to what she is performing at the moment. Some of the inserts are snatches of interviews with her manager and an actor friend (who are played by others), some of them are just cityscapes. One is of Bernhard copulating with a black man. Many of them include an exceptionally pretty young black woman who is the last person left in the club at the end and who, with lipstick, scrawls a pungent message to Bernhard on the tablecloth.

About some of the random intercuts the only rationale I can see is that they *are* random—Cage-like chance. Others, the black woman and the copulating scene, relate to much of what Bernhard does in her performance: songs in various black styles or the opening African-costumed number in which she calls herself black. If she is burdened with guilt-cum-envy toward blacks, that young black woman may be an alter ego (pretty, of course) and the copulation a penance. Most of Bernhard's back-up band and singers and dancers are black. The film features close-ups of black mouths, especially the MC who keeps calling her "Sarah Bernhardt."

Part, too, of the filmic method is the way that the back-up people are often picked up out of the dark in a mosaic of spotlights, thus giving the film a texture that complements Bernhard's performance: her numbers are, and yet aren't, conventional singer-and-band items. When Bernhard does a blasting rock song called "Do You Want to Funk?" the dancers behind her are in

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Longtime Companion. *Honesty and grief mark this drama of the arrival of AIDS in 1981 and its ravages through 1989, as seen by a group of New York gays. Craig Lucas's writing is oddly yet rightly bright. (Reviewed 5/28/90)* **Pathfinder.** *A snowy folk epic, done in the Lapp language by (mostly) Lapp actors. A first film by Nils Gaup, who has sweep and style. (6/11/90)* **Q&A.** *One of Sidney Lumet's better gritty-loving odes to New York. Drugs and police corruption and the fight for reasonable life. Excellently acted. (5/21/90)* **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** *The flashy Pedro Almodóvar, pulling his most daring stunt so far, by channeling his irreverence into an unlikely but warm romance. A porno star, a kidnapping, drugs, yet a happy ending. What nerve. (5/14/90)* **—SK**

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ballet dress, moving ethereally.

The cinematographer is Joseph Yacoe, who surely had the advice of the executive producer, Nicolas Roeg, a cinematographic ace. The director, Boskovich, never lets the screen get static and never makes us think that he is frantic about this. Most of the film takes place in the club, yet it never seems visually dull. It's the best triumph over confinement since Jonathan Demme's direction of *Swimming to Cambodia*.

What does Bernhard actually do? Her numbers range from the opening African one to torch numbers to a Western ballad to a cocktail chanteuse item to rock and Diana Ross and more, for each of which she wears an excellent costume and wig. In almost every number she talks a bit after the opening chorus, then picks up the song again to finish—an old vaudeville device that still works. And she talks between numbers—some of it about fantasies, including one about being Christian. (Her Jewishness worries her, apparently, almost as much as not being black.) Little that she says is laugh-aloud funny, such as her remark that her father is a proctologist, her mother an abstract artist, and that this explains her view of the world. All of it is empathic comedy, decade-oriented. A few lines of it come from her book, *Confessions of a Pretty Lady*. On being taken by her parents to the World's Fair in 1964:

> I remember the day my mom and I were supposed to meet my brother and my father at the Indonesian Pavilion. I mean, who could remember Pavilion, let alone Indonesian. . . . It was all such a new concept. No one speaks of pavilions anymore, and that saddens me somehow.

In a small-scale acute way, she is a social historian.

And, with seeming innocence, she dares and flouts and wickedly juxtaposes. She does an Israeli folk song in Hebrew, inviting her silent, bemused black audience to sing along. Another number she begins, quite irrelevantly, with a line or two of the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead, a veil over her head. She sings her last number in a floor-length cloak made of an American flag, and when she flings it aside, she is wearing only a skimpy tasseled bra and a G-string with red and white stripes. Then she dances. But she is neither a flag- nor a bra-burner. She simply uses, with acumen and wit and compassion, the artifacts and attitudes that her times have provided.

At the end she walks off and disappears into misty white light. The show-biz halation, the off-into-the-atmosphere finish, is very much part of her act, corny and knowingly so, to make sure that, even after she has gone, we don't label her too easily. •

"A call to conscience, a call to commitment, a call to action."
—Reverend Jesse Jackson

CALL TO ACTION

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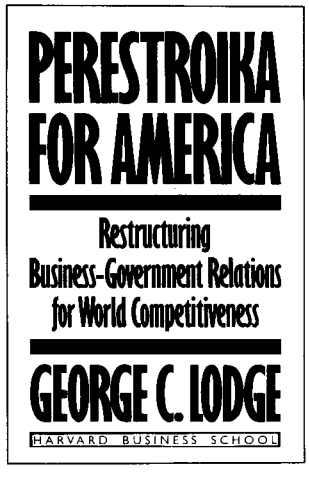

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The new dangers to the new democracies.

After the Revolution

BY ADAM MICHNIK

Politics is the art of achieving political goals—of achieving what is possible in a given situation, that is, in a situation that has its conditions and its limits. In this respect, the ethical point of view, the consideration of what is good and what is bad, what is fair and what is unfair, what is honest and what is dishonest, is external to politics. An ethical action, like an unethical action, is usually analyzed by politicians purely in pragmatic terms. Does it lead toward the goal or does it lead away from it? Montaigne observed, in his famous polemic against Machiavelli, that if a politician rejects ethical norms it can make him untrustworthy, and sometimes deprive his political actions of effectiveness.

Politics and ethics belong to different worlds. Yet we, the men and the women of the anti-totalitarian opposition movements, have a different view of politics, and of our participation in it. The politics of those totalitarian regimes was, after all, an open attack on ourselves, on our freedom, on our dignity, on truth. The elementary reflex of defending those elementary values entangled us in politics, transformed people of culture into people of politics. Thus there was born the phenomenon of an artist or a humanist occupying the center of the political stage in our part of Europe. Thus there was created the political idea of building civil societies outside the totalitarian state (for example, the Workers Defense Committee, or KOR), what George Konrad has called anti-political politics, what Vaclav Havel has described as politics based on the power of the powerless.

Now we are leaving totalitarianism behind. Our nations are shedding the fetters of dictatorship, spitting the gag of censorship. We are engaged in a great experiment of confrontation between the idea of politics based on the power of the powerless and a social reality that was shaped when politics was based on the power of the powerful. We have always announced that our politics will be carried out without violence, without hatred, without revenge. True to the Christian message of our culture, we have always distinguished between the sin and the sinners. We have always tried to behave according to this difference, and we are trying to behave like this now.

But we are encountering the resistance of the social fabric. We see acts of violence, we hear shouts of hatred, we come upon calls for revenge. Sometimes we feel like the sorcerer's apprentice, who released forces that he could not control. These aroused ambitions, these displays of belated courage, these intrigues and personal conflicts, these slanders, these accusations of embezzlements against any adversary, or of being secret agents or crypto-Communists—where do they come from? We look around and ask, Where does this taste for kicking those who are down come from, this ever-growing area of intolerance, this urge to imprison people of the ancien régime, this dream of vengeance, this chauvinism, this xenophobia, this egalitarian demagoguery proper to populism that conceals simple envy? Where does this return to the idea of a nationalist state come from? This explosion of hatred for everyone—for gypsies, for AIDS patients, for all who are different?

What is the mechanism behind this revival of hatred for adversaries in public life? we wonder with concern. And we wonder, after all, whether we are not all children of totalitarian communism, whether we do not all carry inside ourselves the habits, the customs, and the flaws of that system. The death of the Communist system does not mean the end of totalitarian habits. The carefully bred slave of communism did not die with the end of the Communist Party's reign. Even the enemy of communism was often formed in the likeness of the system he was fighting.

We must reflect on what these new developments mean. The hateful chauvinism is a degenerate reaction to the human need for national identity and national sovereignty, a need that was beaten down by communism. The envious populism is a degenerate reaction to the human longing for a just social order. Into the place left empty by Communist ideology, these two fiends steal. Like a cancer attacking the fragile human organism, they attack the tender emerging organism of our pluralist European democracy and our normal market economy.

Let us recall that historically, in our region, nationalism mixed with populism produced fascism. The central contest of this period of transition from totalitarianism to democracy is not mainly a contest of parties or political programs, but a contest of two cultures. It is best symbolized by the names of two outstanding Russian activists of the anti-Communist opposition, Andrei Sakharov and Igor Shafarevich. Sakharov was an exponent of the European tendency within Russian culture; he rejected communism because it trampled on human freedom and human dignity, because it was the dictatorship of the minority *nomenklatura* over the majority of society, and at the same time it persecuted all minorities in the Soviet Union. Shafarevich rejected communism because it was a system foreign to Russia, because he perceived it as a European creation brought to the Russian land by foreigners, and because it preached a godless ideology. So we are returned again to the fundamental dilemma that was formulated by Leszek Kolakowski many years ago. Is communism evil because it is atheist or because it is totalitarian? Do the Communists sin by not adhering to a doctrine or did they stifle the very essence of human and national freedom?

The present period of transition from dictatorship to democracy must consist of a compromise among the main political forces. There must be a pact for democracy. The breaking of this pact makes public life brutal, and introduces anarchy, and eventually chaos. And chaos cannot be reformed. Chaos leads inevitably to dictatorship.

Every revolution, bloody or not, has two phases. The first phase is defined by the struggle for freedom, the second by the struggle for power and revenge on the votaries of the ancien régime. The struggle for freedom is beautiful. Anyone who has taken part in this struggle has felt, almost physically, how everything that is best and most precious within him was awakened. Revenge has a different psychology. Its logic is implacable. First there is a purge of yesterday's adversaries, the partisans of the old regime. Then comes the purge of yesterday's fellow oppositionists, who now oppose the idea of revenge. Finally there is a purge of those who defend them. A psychology of vengeance and hatred develops. The mechanics of retaliation become unappeasable: witness the Jacobin terror and the Iranian revolution.

We inherited from the totalitarian era, like a birthmark, the conviction that wisdom is the same as permanent suspicion. Jozef Tischner is right in saying that this is one of the most serious threats to dem-

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ocratic order in Poland. And yet contemporary Europe provides examples of countries that were able to stop after the first phase of the anti-dictatorial revolution, and thanks to that, they may now enjoy democratic order and wealth. Take Spain. Its transition from dictatorship to democracy demonstrates that a state can be built in which yesterday's political adversaries, the prisoners and their guards, do not lose their political identity, but can, and wish to, live next to each other in a common state, in a state in which they are able to respect the rules of pluralism, tolerance, and honest political struggle.

But we know, if only from looking into the mirror, or deep into our own hearts, how perverted we are by totalitarian communism. We lack democratic culture and democratic institutions. We lack the tradition of democratic coexistence in the framework of a democratic order. In Central and Eastern Europe, each of our countries has its distinct biography, its own secret knowledge about threats to democratic order.

I think of Poland. The Polish experience is well symbolized by Józef Pilsudski. Pilsudski was, in my view, the incarnation of the best Polish traditions of struggle for freedom and for independence. He was, after 1918, the first chief of the independent state, the guarantor of the first free parliamentary elections, and of the passage of the most democratic constitution in Europe. He was also the guarantor of the first democratic election of the president of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz. *And* he was witness to the moment when Poles suddenly lacked the sense of compromise, the moment when this first democratically elected president was murdered following a brutal campaign of hatred in the press and in the streets. Pilsudski retreated to Sulejówek, and the Polish Parliament proved incapable of creating a stable government. Three years later, in 1926, he returned to power at the point of a bayonet. The long and painful agony of Polish parliamentary democracy began.

In sum, the man who fought and won freedom for Poland, the father of Polish independence, also laid the foundation for dictatorship in Poland. He hurled abuses at parliamentarians and at Parliament; he offended political adversaries and was responsible for the shameful Brzesc trials, in which some of his parliamentary opponents, on the left and the right, were imprisoned. The dramatic story of Pilsudski holds a dramatic warning for us. We must always bear in mind this fragment of our heritage of independence, this time when, without Communists and without Soviet advisers, we squandered our opportunity to build a democratic and lawful state.

An intellectual is pretty helpless in the face of these dangers: as a political man he must be efficient, as a man faithful to the ethical origin of his commitment he knows that he must abide by the truth. That is how we are, divided in two. We know how fragile are the bases of democratic order in Poland, and we know that to denounce continuously the slippages in our democracy will make it even more fragile. We face, in these circumstances, a peculiar conflict of loyalties. What is more important, we ask ourselves, the fragile democratic order or the defenseless truth? None of us has a ready answer to the question of which of these two loyalties should prevail. We are doomed to inconsistency. We are doomed to live in a state of tension, uncertainty, permanent risk.

Still, it is not true that we know nothing. We are children of a certain tradition. And we know that this tradition does not permit us to renounce the truth with impunity. We are the children of our Judeo-Christian culture, and we know that this culture, which recommends loyalty toward the state, commands us to bend our knees only before God. We know, therefore, that we should put faithfulness to truth above participation in power. We know, by reaching for our roots, that the truth of politics resides, in the end, in the politics of truth; that every political order is polluted by the original sin of imperfection. We reject the belief in political utopia. We know that our future is an imperfect society, a society of ordinary people and ordinary conflicts—but, precisely for this reason, a society that must not renounce its ethical norms in the name of political illusions.

Yes, it is true that we are helpless before the many ethical traps of contemporary politics. It is then that we reach out for the truth of our own roots, for the ethics of the power of the powerless, or simply for the Ten Commandments. The rest is lies, and has the bitter taste of hypocrisy. •

The Cross-Country Poet

BY BLAKE MORRISON

Westward
by Amy Clampitt

(Knopf, 128 pp., $18.95, $9.95 paper)

Amy Clampitt's new book opens with a bold piece of imaginative transportation, "John Donne in California," setting down a poet who alluded to America but never visited it among the giant redwoods and "New World lizards" of the West:

> Is the Pacific Sea my home? Or is
> Jerusalem? pondered John Donne,
> who never stood among these strenuous,
> huge, wind-curried hills, their green
> gobleted just now with native poppies'
> opulent red-gold . . .

Donne is far from being the only figure, or indeed the only literary figure, to be uprooted in the course of Clampitt's collection. The central theme of the book, as dominant in the last poem as in the first, is of men and women driving westward—pioneers, settlers, immigrants, dreamers, poets. But Donne is the right person for Clampitt to start with, for the poem of his that she cites and expects us to turn to (though uncharacteristically she gives no source in the endnotes) is a "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse," in which Donne imagines his prostrate body as a map (and his doctors as cartographers) and celebrates a heavenly union of East and West. "Is the Pacifique Sea my home? Or are / The Eastern riches? Is Jerusalem?" asks Donne (and Clampitt after him), implying an answer he had already reached in one of his sermons: "In a flat Map, there goes no more, to make West East, though they be distant in an extremity, but to paste that flat Map upon a round body, and then West and East are all one."

Nearly four centuries after Donne, the idea of West and East being united, "all one," remains as frail a conceit as it has always been, but in the euphoria of the present moment, with the bad old empires on their sickbeds all around the globe, it is proper that Clampitt, if ever so obliquely, should catch something of that utopian dream. She is not a political poet, but nor is she so unworldly as she sometimes

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sounds, and her collection, susceptible to historical changes, offers its own special version of late twentieth-century glasnost. It is no coincidence that "The Prairie," which closes her collection, should offer us another fusion of East and West, comparing the experiences of Anton Chekhov in the Russian steppes with those of her own grandfather in the American prairies.

So *Westward*, despite its title, is as much about the East as the West, the Atlantic as the Pacific, Europe as North America. Clampitt calls the opening section of it "Crossings," and it is a word she has earned the right to use, for she is a great poet of crossings over, mediation, cultural exchange. In Europe, or at any rate in Britain, we are very conscious of this: Clampitt, it seems, is the first American poet since Robert Lowell to explore the continuities between her country and ours.

Until Clampitt's arrival, it had become a critical commonplace to assert that American poetry and British poetry were no longer on speaking terms. Since that brief, glorious moment in the late 1950s when the British and American poetic traditions took a parallel course, with the marriage of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath an initially beneficent but finally tragic symbol of the union, the two traditions have been all but severed. Indeed, the suspicion had begun to arise that they have always been implacably opposed, and that separatists like Poe, Whitman, and Williams, for whom being in the American grain meant kicking against the old colonialist British heritage, had it right.

Part of Clampitt's attraction (to us at least) is that she offers a more hopeful version of the relationship between Old World and New. She finds it, for example, in the image of her grandfather, a late nineteenth-century pioneer, whom she describes composing a sonnet in the middle of the prairies. "We have listened too long to the courtly muses," wrote Emerson, and sought instead American "self-trust." Clampitt's grandfather, terrified of the infinite spaces, lacking self-trust and clinging to the reassurances of the Mayflower legacy, cannot oblige him:

> There crowd my mind (he wrote) vague
> fancies
> of Aeolian harpings, twined with weird
> oaks'
> murmurings . . .

Aeolian harpings in Dakota: it is an image that admits dislocation, opposition, even a faint sense of the ridiculous. But for Clampitt's grandfather, a prey to terrible anxieties and crying "Lost, Lost," those Aeolian harpings are a way of finding himself, or at least of comforting a troubled mind. So Clampitt does not judge it reprehensible that the Old World should continue to penetrate the New. She goes on to ask whether it still does so a century later:

> Can the courtly muses
> of Europe, those bedizened crones,
> survive
> the manholes, the vaunt and skitter of
> Manhattan, or
> consort with the dug-in, the hunkering
> guardians
>
> of the Dakotas?

The answer, for her, is that they can and they do. *Westward*, like her three earlier books, is forever turning up connections and continuities: between the European skylark and the North American meadowlark; between a New England violet and a field pansy in Holland; between Scottish heather and blueberries in Maine; between the history of Virginia and the mockingbirds and warblers who move through the state's colonial habitats unheedingly, "ignorant of royal grants, crests / charters, sea power, mercantile / expansion, the imperative to / find an opening, explore, exploit . . ."

For Old World readers, touchy these days about seeming marginal, it is reassuring to find themselves reinstated on the map in this way. The welcome the British gave to *The Kingfisher*, Clampitt's first book, must have had a lot to do with such feelings of gratitude, though perhaps we didn't recognize it at the time: at last an American poet who made us feel we mattered; at last an American poet we could appreciate without having to feel defensive about our own achievements; at last, after futile endeavors to get a grip on Ashbery and Ammons, an American poet we could understand. This may be simply another way of saying that Clampitt is an Anglophile, and it is true that, though the guiding spirits of *The Kingfisher* were Elizabeth Bishop and Marianne Moore, the book also displayed a rich appreciation of such components of English life as damp bed sheets, Peak Frean biscuits, hassocks, toasting forks, sheepdogs, windowboxes, and rain.

That same Anglophilia has since manifested itself in more literary appreciations—of Coleridge, the Wordsworths, Hopkins, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and above all of Keats, to whom Clampitt dedicated one of the sequences in her second book, *What the Light Was Like*. In *Archaic Figure*, her last collection, Clampitt's imagination moved outward and backward to Greece, leading her into a reclamation of female deities and toward her most feminist collection to date. But even here, a reverence for English figures like Dorothy Wordsworth and George Eliot were central to the pattern. And in the new book it is impossible to read beyond the first page without feeling that the British (or the Irish) are at the back of it—whether Hopkins, whose compounding technique is imitated in Clampitt's image of "lofted strong-arm / redwoods' fog-fondled silhouette," or Seamus Heaney, whom one glimpses in "the frail wick of metaphor I've brought to see by."

Yet Anglophilia will not quite serve as an explanation for why it is that Clampitt should have been taken up so enthusiastically on our side of the Atlantic as on her own. One might as easily explain her appeal in terms of what, for the British reader, is its exotica: in birds, beasts, and flowers (porcupines, turtles, sundews, the sea mouse, the beach pea, the grosbeak) familiar to us only from books. It is true that such natural phenomena must look exotic to readers in New York, too, but they are hardly likely to feel the vertiginous thrill that British readers do on reading a Clampitt poem about, for example, a whippoorwill. A whippoorwill! My Columbia Encyclopedia, referring me to "Goatsucker," gives me a fuller description than Clampitt can offer, but she has the better explanation of why it is that rare birds like the whippoorwill should exert such fascination:

> The webbiness,
> the gregariousness of the many are what
> we can't abide.
> We single out for notice
>
> above all what's disjunct, the way birds
> are,
> with their unhooked-up, cheekily anarchic
> dartings and flashings, their uncalled-for
> color . . .

A taste for the exotic is not one that Clampitt would necessarily like to see attributed to her, though, and not only because it might raise questions about her centrality. In "Nothing Stays Put," she wonders whether the exotic can really be said to exist in a world where distance has collapsed, where nowhere is more than a plane-hop away, and where supermarket shelves blaze with the "largesse" of the tropics. Clampitt, who grew up a Puritan and can still sound like one, recoils from this unmerited glut ("we are not entitled"), much as an earlier poem of hers recoiled from central heating.

But this isn't so much a recoil from the contemporary world as a desire to suggest that "the strange and wonderful" can be indigenous, too. She is drawn to, and likes to draw our attention to, the

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neglected, the remote, the out of the way; and there is nowhere like one's own doorstep for finding them. This holds for people as well. The human beings Clampitt likes to celebrate, women mostly, are also neglected and out of the way, and often come associated with a particular piece of indigenous yet exotic fauna: one with a "potted hedge of rubber trees," another with *Rosa rugosa*, a third with the "ubiquitous, unaspiring" beach pea.

The sympathy that Clampitt brings to her descriptions of people and plants does indeed make us feel that they are "strange and wonderful," but this is not because she likes to wow us with their oddities. On the contrary, she has a humdrum care to represent them accurately. Even the whippoorwill sounds pretty familiar by the time Clampitt has finished with it:

> Night after night, it was very nearly
> enough,
> they said, to drive you crazy: a
> whippoorwill
> in the woods repeating itself like the
> stuck groove
> of an LP with a defect, and no way
> possible
> of turning the thing off.
>
> And night after night, they said, in the
> insomniac
> small hours the whipsawing voice of
> obsession
> would have come in closer, the way a sick
> thing does when it's done for— . . .

An evocation like this might serve better than the Columbia Encyclopedia in helping you to recognize the whippoorwill's call. Such an ability in a poet should never be underestimated, and Clampitt has it in abundance. Bishop, who had it too, said of Moore that "if she speaks of a chair you can practically sit on it when she has finished," and Clampitt has learned from both these poets how a finicky notation—of flowers, plants, herbs, birds, animals—can not only displace the need for handbooks and field guides, but create a poetry of its own. Nothing is beneath notice, nothing—not even grasses—too humble to delineate:

> the oats grow tall,
> their pendent helmetfuls
> of mica-drift, examined stem
> by stem, disclose
>
> alloys so various, enamelings
> of a vermeil so
> craftless, I all but despair of
> ever reining in a
>
> metaphor for . . .

But rein in her metaphors she does, of course: the "liquid millennium" of the dawn chorus, the "charred and single coal" of an oriole, the "yearning seedling choir" of canary droppings in a cage. The rush of physical impressions can threaten to overwhelm not only the reader but the poet, too, who describes herself a couple of times as "fazed," and who in her most intense moments comes across as the sort of woman you might meet at dusk on the shoreline with an armful of shells, driftwood and fishing net—wide-eyed, pantheistic, half-cracked. But she is prepared to risk a reputation for genteel craziness so long as that also allows her a place in posterity as (to adapt Hardy) a woman who used to notice such things.

The contradictions of such a persona—the poet whose genius for noticing is also held to be an eccentricity, whose careful attention to the look of things is held to be, socially, a carelessness—are ones she writes well about in "The Field Pansy," which uncovers a connection between three different kinds of flowers, and speaks of

> this gushing insouciance that appears at
> the same time capable
> of an all but infinite particularity:
> sedulous, patient, though
> in the end (so far as anyone can see)
> without consequence.
> What is consequence? What difference do
> the minutiae
> of that seeming inconsequence that's
> called beauty
>
> add up to? . . .

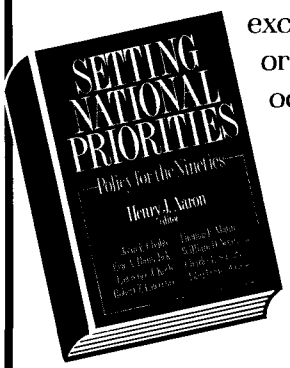
Phrased as a question though this is, it offers an implicit defense of Clampitt's art, which will put up with being called "inconsequential" so long as it has the consequence of capturing and creating beauty.

It is a difficult double-act to perform—insouciance on the one hand, sedulousness on the other—and Clampitt does not always bring it off. At times her thoroughness becomes a self-defeating pedanticism, as if she has thought out and read up on her subject to the point where there is nothing left to discover in the act of writing the poem, and where a scholarly paper (or indeed one of her ample source notes) might serve equally well. At this point her poetry can sound academic, prone to an Eng. Lit. piety (all *hommages* to the giants) and to a fussy, ornate, affected vocabulary—"the zenith's frescoed-by-/ Tiepolo cerulean."

But if at its worst her poetry smells of the lamp, at its best it works like a flashlight, purposeful in its glare but always likely to chance on bright objects in the dark. Her casual-seeming line breaks help this effect of spontaneity: resistant to rhymes and end stops, it is a verse that stays alert to lucky breaks, sudden

BROOKINGS

"Will America choose excellence or mediocrity?"
—Henry J. Aaron



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insights, the brief epiphanies of a life lived on the move. Her poetry is full of lists, accumulating and itemizing in verbless sentences the riches of things read or observed ("spring mud and summer dust, / burdocks, beatings, piety," "Collectives. Tractor lugs. / Names: brunizem and chernozem; culm / rhizome and stolon"). More usually, though out of the same restlessly notating spirit, she prefers long sentences. "Iola, Kansas," for example, is one long sentence running over eight stanzas and bringing us the Midwest as seen from a Greyhound:

> we're in Kansas now, we've turned off the freeway,
> we're meandering, as again night falls, among farmsteads,
> the little towns with the name of a girl on the watertower,
> the bandstand in the park at the center, the churches
>
> alight from within, perpendicular banalities of glass
> candy-streaked purple-green-yellow (who is this Jesus?),
> the strangeness of all there is, whatever it is, growing
> stranger, we've come to a rest stop, the name of the girl
>
> on the watertower is Iola: no video, no vending machines,
> but Wonder Bread sandwiches, a pie: "It's boysenberry,
> I just baked it today," the woman behind the counter
> believably says, the innards a purply glue . . .

Whether this stands up, grammatically, as a sentence is doubtful (". . . growing stranger, we've come to a rest stop" surely requires stronger punctuation than a comma), but there can be no doubt that it is the *mode juste*, the commas and the colons acting like rest stops on a long journey, the full stop delayed for the end.

The long sentence, often broken up by one or several sets of parentheses, has become an increasing feature of Clampitt's work and has never seemed more appropriate than in *Westward*. It expresses the rootlessness and the restlessness that is her subject here, the feeling of drawn-out journeys and great movements and migrations, of destinations finally arrived at but even then perhaps only provisionally, and certainly only after several detours so elaborate that the direction in which we are moving looks to have been forgotten. The most spectacular example of this comes in the title poem itself, which is an account of a journey Clampitt took to Iona, in the Western Isles of Scotland, home of St. Columba and Christianity.

Beginning in London, among the "reverse" migrants of a spent commonwealth, those from the fringe returning to the old imperial heart, Clampitt heads northward and westward, her journey becoming a symbol for all the "embarkations, landings, dooms, conquests" of people in search of God, or of the promised land. It takes two interminable sentences toward the end before Clampitt brings us to "the brim of an illumination" about

> a zeal ignited somewhere to the east, concealed in hovels, quarreled over,
>
> portaged westward: a basket weave, a fishing net, a weir to catch, to salvage some tenet, some common intimation for
>
> all flesh, to hold on somehow till the last millennium: as though the routes, the ribbonings and redoublings, the
>
> attenuations, spent supply lines, frayed-out gradual of the retreat from empire, all its castaways, might still bear witness.

This is Clampitt's most high-flown and religious version of what the westward impulse means. As the title poem, it acquires a certain definitiveness. But other meanings multiply throughout the course of the book. "Westward" is the search for gold, money, jobs, opportunity, a home; it is a flight from the fear of infinite spaces; it is the urge to civilize, colonize, tame, subdue, settle; it is an existential quest, the search for a freedom to "throw one's life away" as one chooses:

> This being what all the rush
> of westward-the-course-of-empire finally comes down to:
>
> to be free, as Isabel Archer pig-headedly put it, to meet one's fate,
> to take one's chances, try on disguises . . .

Above all, "westward" is Clampitt's own search for roots, the return she makes from points east to the "evangel-haunted prairie hinterland" of her upbringing, a "farmhouse childhood, kerosene-lit, tatting and mahogany-genteel," which she left as an "intemperate" teenager to head for the "glittering shambles / of enthrallments and futilities" that goes by the name of Manhattan. As that image shows, Clampitt now shrinks from the vacuity of urban "monoculture": the color and generosity of what she finds in nature are a reproach to the gray human alternative in Manhattan, "every pittance under lock and key / a party to the general malfeasance." But this is not to say that there was anything especially wholesome about her ancestor-settlers, "far from hot baths," who, social outcasts of a kind, fled to discover new worlds but soon enough were imposing a "neat and fearful grid of settlement" that would enable them in turn to find someone else more vagrant "to look down on." Clampitt, in other words, is not sentimental about her roots.

Hovering over her book is a play on the word "settled": conscious (from reading his privately printed pamphlet) of her grandfather's unsettled mind, she tries to settle something in her own mind. Is not settlement primarily an attempt to ward off spiritual unsettlement? Is it not therefore doomed to failure, however often roots are put down and civilization spreads? And isn't man's natural state, however much he may seek to be at rest somewhere, to be mobile? Some such suggestion underlies "The Prairie" and allows its ending, which might otherwise be a sad record of Clampitt's failed homecoming, to have an air of exhilaration about it:

> No one
>
> I know or ever heard of lives there now.
> On Summit, from some long-obliterated snapshot, I thought I recognized the house
>
> a great-aunt lived in once: the number not quite right, the tenant an old deaf Mexican who did not understand.

Not being able to return to where you came from leaves you freer to be what you are: that would seem to be the almost joyous consolation Clampitt takes from her frustrated journey. It is the same exultant note that one hears at the end of "Iola, Kansas":

> and through some duct in the rock I feel my heart go out,
> out here in the middle of nowhere (the scheme is a mess)
> to the waste, to the not knowing who or why, and am happy.

It is this surrender that makes Clampitt a more truly modern poet than her occasional snappishness at contemporary urban culture would lead you to think. In the brightness and the diversity and the "unhooked-up" independence of the bird world she finds a model ("free as a bird") to live by; and in the migrations of her ancestors she confirms her own migrating spirit, which, unlike theirs, will never seek to find *the* place to settle. *Westward* is not her most accessible book, but it is her most self-aware one. Failing to come home at the end of it, she can now be said to have truly arrived.

BLAKE MORRISON is literary editor of *The Independent on Sunday* and the author of two collections of poetry.

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The Newer Deal

BY JAMES Q. WILSON

Our Country: The Shaping of America From Roosevelt to Reagan by Michael Barone

(Free Press, 840 pp., $29.95)

Michael Barone is the Baedeker of American politics, an indispensable and clear-eyed companion for any voyager setting forth across the electoral constituencies and contests of this country. For years Barone and Grant Ujifusa have produced biannual editions of *The Almanac of American Politics* that describe in lively and accurate detail the political contours of every state, congressional district, and national legislator in the nation. It is hard to imagine a politician who could afford not to consult it (well, no; politicians don't read, but their staffers do, or they pretend to). Without it, certainly, teaching and writing about American politics would be next to impossible.

Now Barone has brought together his formidable knowledge and his even-handed judgments to review what we know about a half century of American elections and the American people. *Our Country* is a history of modern American politics. Its great strength is its meticulous attention to political particulars: to election returns, opinion polls, and census data, which put into perspective the struggles for power and programs that took place from the New Deal to the Reagan revolution. The book offers no grand theories and grinds no ideological axes; there is not even a concluding chapter that ties together the events of the half century or assesses their significance. But there is a theme to the book, though it is not elaborately developed.

Barone's theme is that the American people are more likely, save in times of financial distress, to divide along cultural lines than along economic lines. These divisions are, for Barone, a reflection of our perpetually asking, and trying to answer, the question, Who is really an American? Today the question is raised in the context of abortion and gay rights; earlier it was asked in the context of McCarthyism, isolationism, income redistribution, Korea, Vietnam, Watergate, and Jimmy Carter's "malaise."

The persistence of cultural issues in American politics is a practical feature of what scholars call the doctrine of American exceptionalism. As Tocqueville was the first to note, no one can explain the fundamental tendencies of American politics without reference to the extraordinary and enduring influence of certain core beliefs—liberty, constitutionalism, individualism, and something called "Americanism." We have had class politics, especially when labor was struggling to gain recognition from management or when farmers were losing their livelihoods, but it has been a peculiar and rather halfhearted assertion of class identity.

In a curious inversion of Marx, class in America often appears to be the epiphenomenon of culture. Consider: as the Great Depression deepened in 1932, support for left-wing parties did not rise, it actually declined. And as the New Deal got under way, polls showed the great majority of citizens favoring job creation rather than income redistribution. Even among the unemployed, class politics was the exception, not the rule, and individual self-reliance retained its appeal. When the sit-down strikes began in Detroit, more Americans supported GM than backed the strikers.

The New Deal was popular, and so it was only to be expected that the people would rise up in anger against a Supreme Court that was blocking its implementation. Not so; most people wanted a more liberal Court, but they resolutely opposed Roosevelt's efforts to produce it by his court-packing plan, and later more people said that Roosevelt had too much power than said he had too little. Similarly, though we were in some sense isolationist in 1939-40, Americans supported, by a two-to-one majority, Lend Lease to help Britain. When the war ended, the people and the (Republican) Congress supported the Marshall Plan for Europe to the tune $5 billion—not much money by today's standards, but at the time the equivalent of two percent of the entire gross national product and almost one-sixth of the entire federal budget, and it was an election year. Joseph McCarthy's behavior, a stain on American politics, is

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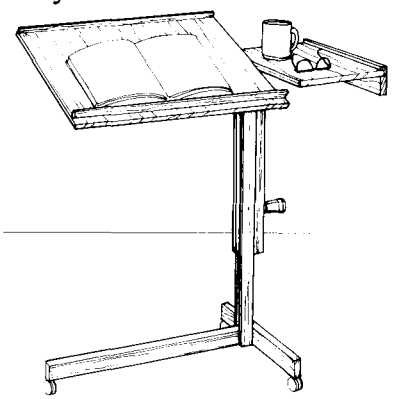

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often explained by saying that he tapped a darkly nativist and conformist strand in American thought. But Barone reminds us that by March 1954, before the Army-McCarthy hearings began, the public had turned against him, and after the hearings they were overwhelmingly hostile.

The paradoxes and the idiosyncrasies of American politics are nowhere better illustrated than by Barone's recapitulation of a series of events that someday soon will be a question on every final examination in Political Science 101: "Name the president who recognized Red China, proposed a guaranteed annual income, required federal contractors to have an affirmative action plan, imposed peacetime wage and price controls, promised never again to send U.S. troops to fight in Asia, created the Environmental Protection Agency, and nominated as chief justice a man who supported court-ordered busing to end school integration." No, it wasn't George McGovern; he *lost* the election.

But the paradoxes and anomalies of American politics cannot be wholly explained by the working out of the tensions and tendencies in the general political culture. Popular beliefs cannot explain the vast increase in the government's debt, the ascendancy of affirmative action programs, the continuance of foreign aid programs, the deregulation of civil aviation, or the resistance to economic protectionism. The public has steadfastly opposed all of these policies, and in many cases—such as affirmative action or deficit financing—on grounds of deeply held principles.

For all Barone's sensitivity to the nuances of public opinion, the book has next to nothing to say about elite opinion, or the institutions through which that opinion operates. This has an odd consequence: if FDR read this book, he might be forgiven for concluding that little in American politics has changed since his time (coupled with some mild astonishment at just how far Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were able to carry New Deal initiatives). But I think a great deal has changed, and the change is at least as important as the continuity, and institutional processes at least as significant as popular belief.

Barone's great strength as a writer is that he stays close to the people, taking their pulse, sensing their moods, and traveling to their towns. Public opinion polls amply confirm what he tells us—that Americans do not alter their political beliefs quickly or lightly. They have long been suspicious of big government, but they are often ready to support an array of programs that require big government. They have slowly lost confidence in American leaders in almost every walk of life, political and nonpolitical, but the decline has been steady, not precipitous, and has led to a grumpy cynicism rather than a revolutionary fervor. And this decline seems to have been wholly directed at leaders, not at the system: the Constitution, the presidency (albeit not particular presidents), the courts, the police—the "American way"—enjoy continued and extraordinary support. Moreover, the loss of trust in our leaders has been accompanied by a heightened trust of one another. By almost any measure, we claim to be more tolerant than we once were.

But surely something has changed. American government is vastly larger and more complex than it was during the period with which Barone's narrative begins. A half century ago nobody would have imagined the extent to which liberties would be broadened. Nude dancing now enjoys a level of constitutional protection once reserved for abolitionist editorials. Though the courts may have been ahead of public opinion on matters of obscenity, the public is catching up. Thirty years ago the attacks of Jesse Helms on Robert Mapplethorpe might well have ignited a popular protest against pornography. What is striking today is not that Helms leads the attack, but that so few (outside of Congress) follow. Americans have become more libertarian in matters of taste.

Hardly anyone would have foretold the extent to which law would be mustered in support of rights: in the 1940s one could have foreseen the day when schools would be desegregated, but no one could have foreseen that the courts would decide that children must go to school together even if it means busing them there.

Americans were accustomed to supporting the president in his military decisions, but hardly any American would have said in advance that sending troops to Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, or Grenada sounded like a good idea. Most people were quite prepared to see the federal government regulate big business, but very few were interested in seeing the government deregulate air travel, telecommunications, or financial institutions.

Americans care deeply about what touches them deeply—family, jobs, health, security—and they are always ready to support leaders who offer better ways of meeting those concerns. If the new policies appear to produce better results, those policies become the baseline for public opinion. Nobody should be surprised that we have Medicare; it was only a matter of time before its congressional opponents lost the ability to prevent that program from being born. Nor should anyone be surprised that consumer and environmental protection laws command general support. All that is surprising is that a Congress, ordinarily so sensitive to the complaints of groups that must bear the costs, was able to impose those costs.

I wish to suggest, however, that many of the largest changes of the last half century have occurred not because of popular demands, but because of elite interests. I have already mentioned some aspects of civil liberties, civil rights, deregulation, and foreign policy. Scholars are very good at explaining why Congress distributes material benefits to particular constituencies; they are not very good at explaining why it translates general ideas into new policy directions. Ideas are the currency of political elites, and elite opinion is always more volatile than public opinion. The ideas I have in mind are often not very profound or very well thought-out, but their power does not depend on their depth or feasibility; it depends, rather, on their being plausible and satisfying representations of a new way of looking at the world.

I can give only a caricatured account of the depth of those changes. Still, something might be learned from an oversimplification. Compare, then, the views of a self-described liberal or conservative member of Congress (or editorial writer) in the 1950s with those of such a person today.

Then: The standard liberal believed in equal opportunity and a colorblind Constitution, was closely allied with and supportive of the union movement, gave unequivocal support to Israel, thought nuclear power was a blessing to mankind, opposed judicial activism because it had been used to block the New Deal, and took pride in the idea that the United States would be the world's policeman. The standard conservative was, at best, indifferent to civil rights, hostile to unions, in favor of judicial activism, desirous of conserving the environment, and thought the country should adopt the posture of Fortress America, not pax Americana.

Now: Many liberals believe in affirmative action (that is, equality of outcome), ignore or actively dislike union leaders, are equivocal about Israel, oppose nuclear power, like activist judges, and think that promoting human rights abroad is more important than promoting international stability. Many conservatives have very nearly the opposite of these views (and thus of the views

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that they had forty years ago).

At a deeper level, of course, one can find continuity. Liberals might be defined by their concern for social justice, conservatives by their commitment to individual opportunity; the changes in opinion of these groups are merely the result of adapting new means to old ends in response to changed circumstances. Still, these adaptations have fundamentally altered the political landscape. Means to attain ends have become ends in themselves. These changes must have made a difference, but Barone does not tell us what it may have been. And unless he or someone else does, we cannot account for many of the most important shifts in public policy that mark—indeed, in many cases, define—American politics from Roosevelt to Reagan.

And institutions have changed as well. The transformation of American politics began with Roosevelt, but it did not end there. In retrospect, the New Deal was less revolutionary than it first appeared. While it established the legitimacy of national social welfare policies and forged a new Democratic Party coalition to support them, it did not alter fundamentally the way decisions were made.

After the enthusiasms of the Hundred Days passed, states' rights were once again reasserted as a serious check on federal power. Though the Supreme Court abandoned its early opposition to new federal initiatives, it did not take initiatives of its own, in the 1930s or 1940s, by discovering new rights or providing new grounds for citizen action against the state. While business interest groups were thrown on the defensive and labor interest groups nurtured into robust political life, the universe of those groups was still narrowly defined. For thirty years after FDR, it was still possible to write textbooks about "pressure groups" that did not venture much beyond the Chamber of Commerce, the AFL and the CIO, the American Medical Association, and the Farm Bureau Federation. Nobody talked about congressional staffers, "issue networks," or "beltway bandits." Professional politicians existed, but a professional political class did not.

Madison would have been distressed and astonished by the New Deal; Hamilton might have been distressed, but not astonished. Surely the premises of, and the participants in, national politics have been altered in ways that the Founders—of the republic and of the New Deal—would scarcely have recognized. Politics has been nationalized, judicialized, rationalized.

Once a powerful argument against federal action, states' rights have now collapsed with the advent of civil rights legislation, the imposition of a national maximum speed limit, and federal supervision of local elections. Where grants-in-aid to the states once provided federal dollars to serve state objectives, they now provided federal funds to serve federal mandates.

Once the courts deferred to agency administrators in implementing regulatory policies, deferred to the other branches of government with respect to a variety of "political questions" (such as legislative apportionment), kept litigants lacking a direct stake in an issue out of court altogether, and found new rights only in those provisions of the Constitution that, by tortured reasoning, could be said to yield something called "freedom of contract." Today courts are prepared to substitute their judgment of good policy for that of the EPA and are no longer prepared to let Congress or state legislatures draw district lines as they wish. The range of litigants who now can claim standing in court has broadened immeasurably: law students who like clean air were allowed to intervene in a proceeding to set railroad rates, people whose only stake in a church-state issue was that they were taxpayers were allowed to contest a proposed expenditure on behalf of church-related organizations. The Supreme Court has found a right of privacy in the "emanations" of various parts of the Constitution, and some justices have claimed that the Constitution does not allow the death penalty even though that document refers in two or three places to procedures that should be followed in imposing it. As many scholars have noted, our statutes and their interpretation are now suffused with the spirit of adversarial legalism.

Policy-making has been rationalized in the sense that partial interests are now suspect and "general" interests are thought paramount. Business, labor, doctors, farmers, and particular localities are such partial interests; a political process that once unashamedly aggregated the preferences of those clients and distributed benefits among them is now embarrassed to do so, and often refuses to. The logic of industrial policy, environmental legislation, and consumer protection regulations is that there is a unitary, general interest, discoverable by reason and achievable by plan.

Old-style client politics is everywhere on the defensive: even the redoubtable tobacco farmers of North Carolina and their champion Jesse Helms have been forced to abandon any hope of large federal subsidies for their crops, and to turn instead to a federally administered plan that is financed by the contributions of the farmers themselves. There are, of course, still clients making effective claims on government, but increasingly those clients are of a new type—not producer or territorial interests, but national, ideological, or system-wide interests, such as those pressing for tax reform, abortion on demand, the right to life, campaign-finance reform, an end to the civil war in El Salvador, or the prevention of global warming.

These changes can be overstated, and I have probably done so. The states continue to play a significant role in national affairs; the courts devote most of their time to adjudicating ordinary disputes in accord with traditional understandings; there are lots of old-style interest groups making demands. But some changes in degree are so large and numerous as to constitute changes in kind. It is time that someone wrote a book that explores them. That book should have as its audience a reincarnated Franklin Roosevelt, Arthur Vandenberg, Robert A. Taft, and Richard Russell, and it should take as its task explaining to those powerful and purposive men where they would find power and purpose in American government today.

There have been some good beginning efforts at this task. *The New American Politics*, edited by Anthony King in 1978, set forth many of the themes I have enlarged upon here, and now a second and thoroughly revised edition has appeared. Benjamin Ginsberg and Martin Shefter have just written *Politics By Other Means*, arguing that elections have lost their importance in the United States as we have become locked into a cycle of divided government that carries on its partisan and institutional wars by means of congressional investigations, media revelations, personal scandals, special prosecutors, and budgetary evasions. L. Gordon Crovitz and Jeremy Rabkin have assembled in *The Fettered Presidency* a number of essays arguing that Arthur Schlesinger's fears of an imperial presidency, if they were ever valid, ought now to be replaced with fears of an embattled and sometimes impotent one. Through four editions stretching from 1977 to 1989, Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer and their collaborators on *Congress Reconsidered* have detailed the growing decentralization and individualization of Congress, a trend that has taken an unexpected turn—the growth in the House of new efforts at central management, such as can be seen in the greater power now exercised by the

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What are the facts?

■ Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the invading Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

■ The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times and now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Al Aksa Mosque. It is close to the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed himself never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. In recognition of the city's holiness to Jews, Moslems built the Al Aksa Mosque. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina—cities that no "infidel" may visit.

■ It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the Al Aksa Mosque entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, the Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city." And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews."

■ But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to such cities as Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus—has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never even a provincial or sub-provincial capital. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a civic and religious backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the Al Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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The forces that have contributed to these changes are thought to be well known: television, direct mail, the civil rights revolution, the decline of party loyalties in the electorate, and so forth. But it is not clear to me that what everyone knows, while true enough, is sufficiently true, sufficiently fundamental, to explain a transformation that nobody in FDR's Cabinet or Congress could have foreseen, even if somebody had explained to them that television was about to be invented. In fact, after television arrived and party loyalties began to decline, scholars such as James MacGregor Burns were writing books complaining of the "deadlock" of American democracy, by which they meant the inability of government to adopt large (and, of course, liberal) new programs. It was an ill-timed message; the vast legislative outpouring of the 1960s and 1970s came right on the heels of these predictions.

Hedrick Smith in *The Power Game* has given us a portrait of the new American politics, one that might be summarized this way. The costs of political mobilization have been lowered in ways that permit more interests to be heard, make it easier for politicians to develop individual and personal, rather than institutional and partisan, relations with their constituents, and offer more opportunities for intervention in policy-making. The advent of direct-mail solicitations, activist foundations, and easier access to courts have dramatically expanded the scope of influence on government and enhanced the power of ideological symbols as against pecuniary stakes. But Smith's portrait is incomplete and, to a degree, distorted, a deficiency that is revealed by its title. Politics is not simply about power, it is also about purpose; and politics is not simply a game, it is a manifestation of a nation's institutions and beliefs.

If the cost of political mobilization may have been lowered, the demand for such mobilization has risen and taken bold new forms. We now routinely expect the national government to do something about drugs, crime, AIDS, toxic wastes, and the homeless—matters that, in the years when Barone begins his narrative, would not have been thought proper subjects for federal action. We all remember that until the 1960s Washington did not have civil rights on its agenda—it was a matter of "states' rights." But we forget that Washington also acted, until the 1960s, as if crime were a matter of states' rights. Many legislators were opposed to allowing the FBI to investigate prostitution and auto thefts, and J. Edgar

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Hoover's well-known aversion to FBI involvement in narcotics and organized-crime cases was in part a reflection of what he had learned about the limits of congressional tolerance for federal meddling in local affairs.

In sum, there has been a transformation of public expectations about the scope of federal action, one that has put virtually everything on Washington's agenda and left nothing off. If you doubt it, try thinking of a human want or difficulty that is not now defined as a "public policy problem." Moreover, the language by which that transformation was accomplished was that of individual rights: morally superior and legally defensible claims for protections and remedies. Ronald Dworkin may be incorrect in asserting that rights ought to be trumps, but he is certainly correct in noting that rights have become trumps.

We need a new Bryce or a new Tocqueville to explain all this. In the meantime Americans seem, in Aaron Wildavsky's phrase, to be doing better while feeling worse. The nation is reasonably prosperous and extraordinarily free, and deeply held principles on which we have spent blood and money for a half century have been vindicated by the collapse of the Soviet empire with, so far, a whimper, not a bang. Yet we seem curiously unable to exult in all this.

Part of the reason, I suppose, is that we take the good for granted and reserve our attention for the bad. But there is more to it. The exuberance with which we fought and won a great war, the pride with which we took our place as the world's dominant nation, the confidence that intellectuals have always had in the power of reason to produce the good society: all these have been eroded by the daily frustrations of trying to manage the work of an activist government enmeshed in the countless details of everybody's business, by the recognition that America must share her position on the world stage with nations that fifty years ago either did not exist or were our supine enemies, and above all by the growing recognition that reason alone cannot create the conditions for a good life, or sustain the spirit of those who try to live it.

JAMES Q. WILSON is the Collins Professor of Management and Public Policy at UCLA. His most recent book is *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (Basic Books).

Out of Focus

BY JED PERL

Photography Until Now by John Szarkowski

(Museum of Modern Art/Little, Brown, 343 pp., $60)

The 150th anniversary of the invention of photography has hardly passed without celebration, and yet this year of commemorative exhibitions and appreciations has turned out to be rather sedate, at least if we compare it with the period a decade or so ago, when photography held the educated public in its thrall. From the late 1960s until the early 1980s, photography's variegated past attracted people who followed developments in pop, minimal, and conceptual art but found much of the work overcalculated and unimaginative. Photography answered a very natural need to feel romantically engaged with the look of the world. It was a coolly romantic medium, moreover, a medium that fit in with the high-tech chic of the 1970s. Photography's haunting mix of the mechanistic and the empathetic had exerted its allure since the Surrealists of the 1920s, but it took the late 1960s, when high culture assimilated so many of the ambitions of pop culture, to turn photography into the medium of the moment. There was a wave of new books, articles, and exhibitions; and collectors went off to the auction houses and paid unprecedented prices.

In retrospect, the collector Sam Wagstaff, who died in 1987, looks like the emblematic figure of the photography-infatuated 1970s. Wagstaff had been a curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Detroit Institute of Arts, and was already middle-aged when he came into a family fortune in the 1960s, moved to New York, and became, with his good looks and elegant bearing, one of the aristocrats of the downtown scene. He had collected pop art; but soon he gave that up to devote himself to photogra-

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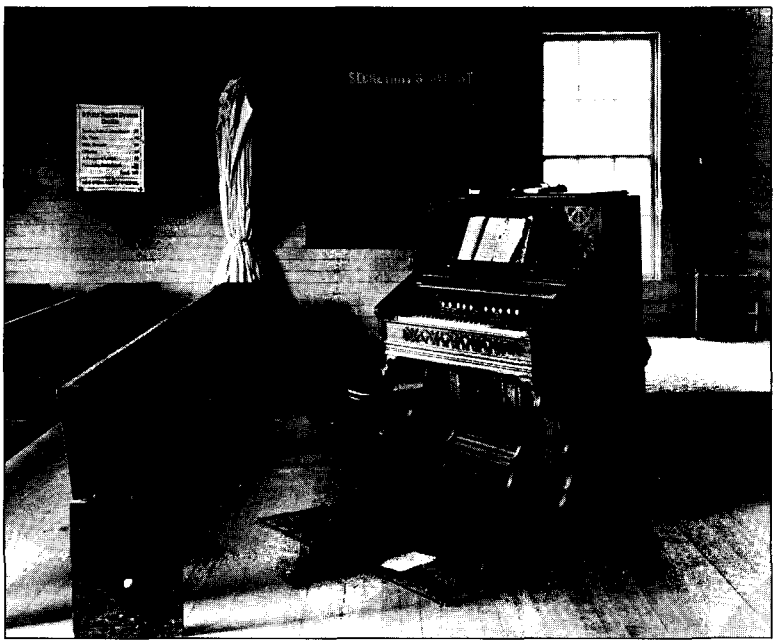
phy, partly under the influence of his friend Robert Mapplethorpe, whose flower photographs Wagstaff helped to give some of their earliest public exposure. Wagstaff put together a great collection, which he sold to the Getty Museum in 1984, when his interests began to shift to late nineteenth-century American silver.

I recall running into Wagstaff the day after he'd finished reading Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, and he was fired up about that brilliant book; he seemed to feel that Sontag was underplaying the aesthetic side of photography. But Wagstaff's was too agile and kaleidoscopic a mind to be pious about the relationship between photography and art. He loved the multifariousness of photography, the way it escaped museum definitions of art: that was photography's appeal in the 1970s. This connoisseur of photographs was a voyeur who liked the opportunities that photographs afforded to study the famous, the infamous, and the unknown at leisure. He could enjoy photographs for the beauty of the things that they represented, or for the presentation, or as examples of an evolving technology, or he could take the totality of a photographer's work as the artist's self-portrait. (And, hell, photographs were affordable—at least before wealthy collectors, Wagstaff among them, started buying.) For someone like Wagstaff, who wanted to immerse himself in sensation, photography was pure sensation: maybe it was better than painting.



WALKER EVANS, *CHURCH ORGAN, ALABAMA*, 1936

Now, a few years later, people who were once preoccupied with photography have walked through the beautiful 150th anniversary show at the Museum of Modern Art, "Photography Until Now," and found that they have trouble connecting with what is on the walls. The signs of diminishing interest in photography are all around us. Writing about photography doesn't have the urgency that it had fifteen years ago, when Hilton Kramer was making the case for the art of the camera in *The New York Times* and Susan Sontag was using photomania as the occasion for her most sustained exploration of contemporary sensibility. In the second half of the 1980s photography galleries had a hard time of it; some have closed their doors. And there aren't any more brilliant, provocative collectors—collectors of Wagstaff caliber.

Even John Szarkowski, the curator of photography at MOMA, seems at pains to explain that our appetite for photography has abated. In this book, which doubles as the show's catalog—it's a rather laconic history of photography in the form of seven brief chapters—Szarkowski talks cautiously about the end of an era, an era that he is anxious not to overrate, probably because he doesn't want the present to look too bleak by comparison. He observes that "during the 1960s and for much of the 1970s photographic education was a growth industry, and the work of its star performers was of interest even to those who were perhaps not deeply interested in photography, but who were interested in trends." He mentions the Witkin Gallery, which opened in 1969 and was

> notable for the wide variety of contemporary and historical work that it showed and offered for sale. Although the gallery's standards were high, it could hardly be said to have had an aesthetic position, and if this relaxed perspective made the place seem more like a superior jumble shop than a modern art gallery, the fact perhaps worked to its advantage. Witkin and his clientele were interested in photography as a distinct and independent issue. . . . A few years later the character of photography's presence in commercial galleries had changed; often photography had come to seem not an alternative idea but merely an alternative medium.

Szarkowski's approach to what was without a doubt the golden age of photographic connoisseurship is measured and realistic. In support of the health of the current scene it can be said that auction prices are sky-high, and that photography has never before been taken so seriously in the academy and the museums. But all this may only serve to underline the extent to which the revelations are in the past and the excitement has died down. Of the situation of contemporary photographers, Szarkowski remarks, "During the past generation [they] have worked without a clear sense of a communal role, that they might either serve or revise." The anniversary came too late, the celebrants have gone home. And so the rather odd title that Szarkowski has given to his show sets the right tone. "Photography Until Now," at once definitive and casual, suggests that we have reached an end point, that the future is not exactly continuous with the past.

Given that the boom is over, there could be no better place than MOMA to come together for a celebration and a reckoning. So much of what we've seen of the art of photography originated at this institution, which established its department of photography (the world's oldest) fifty years ago. For many people, their first impressions of classic photographs were formed at MOMA; and this show turned out to be a homecoming. The black-and-white images of Steiglitz and Walker Evans and Cartier-Bresson and Irving Penn, hanging for all those years on the walls of the museum, have come to be associated with the black-and-white drama of New York City itself. By now photography at MOMA is knit as deeply into the fabric of the city as the chestnut vendors on the corner of Fifty-Seventh Street and Fifth Avenue.

Looking at an Atget or a Weston in those white, squarish MOMA galleries is something we've been doing (practically) forever. Szarkowski likes us—wants us—to regard photographs as objects for delectation. He also wants us to think of the evolution of photography as technology: this is a healthy response to the work of the current generation of scholars. His book calls attention to the revelations of recent years, the discoveries of early French photography in general and of Charles Marville in particular; of the photographers of the American West such as Charles Weed, Carlton Watkins, and Eadweard Muybridge; of nineteenth-century architectural photography; of the seemingly unself-

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conscious images by anonymous or near-anonymous workers that so often resemble (strikingly) the most self-conscious works of modern art. "Photography Until Now" represents the history of photography as capacious, ranging from the elaborately lyrical ambitions of Julia Margaret Cameron and Frederick Evans to the documentary works that sometimes turn out to be the more richly poetic ones.

Here we are invited to revel in a great variety of colors and textures: old photographs aren't all black and white. Szarkowski takes us from the delicate gray mirror that is the daguerreotype to the soft opaque darks of the Talbotype to the perfect resolution of the later prints from glass negatives and the inky blacks of twentieth-century silver prints. He weaves together landscapes and portraits and genre scenes and still lifes into a meandering progress that is both idiosyncratic and ambitious. Perhaps he has labored overly much to avoid the textbook classics. Still, who can blame him for being bored with the icons (if that's the case)? And if some of the exclusions are odd (where is the American Gothic surrealist Clarence John Laughlin?) and the balances are off (one Walker Evans and three Marvilles?), this may have more to do with Szarkowski's sense of who's been overexposed than with a desire to present the last word on the subject.

The show and its book are full of small, concentrated pleasures. Szarkowski is not averse to photographs that hold us mostly through the beauty of their subject matter. He likes the odd and the piquant. When we see worn stones and bits of graffiti in the architectural photographs of the 1850s and 1860s, we smile with pleasure at the thought that even then life had its delightful minor blemishes. By de-emphasizing masterworks—and including a great many works by anonymous or virtually unknown photographers—he has produced a history that is true to our experience of a medium that revels in the variety of the world. But this variousness may also be what ultimately drives some people away. The camera, which draws no conclusions, is content to present the world as cobbled together out of fragments.

In place of a history based on great photographers, Szarkowski proposes a history based on the technological evolution of the medium. "I have attempted to sketch out a history of photographic pictures, organized according to patterns of technological change." Szarkowski sees particular photographers as responding to the changing characteristics of the medium: the different qualities inherent in photographs on metal (the daguerreotype) and on paper; the relative clarity obtainable with the early paper and later glass negatives; the possibilities for catching movement that are triggered by faster shutter speeds; the particular demands that are placed on photographers as their work becomes a staple of the pictorial press. With each of these developments, certain artistic possibilities are opened and closed.

Szarkowski's idea that technology is the guiding force in the development of photographic art has considerable appeal. Contemporary taste tends to favor a history that diminishes the role of inspired individuals; and this contextual view of history meshes neatly with an older modern idea that the driving force in art is the medium itself. When Szarkowski says that photographic art is the "work that embodies the clearest, most eloquent expression of photography's historic and continuing search for a renewed and vital identity," he speaks as both a materialist and an idealist. But one need not take a philosophical view in order to see that this most plebeian and democratic of visual forms has extraordinary poetic powers.

Alfred Steiglitz was the first American photographer who educated his taste by studying the medium's plebeian nature. Steiglitz began around the turn of the century as a pictorialist—as a photographer who wanted to give his work the high-gloss effects of museum art. But he eventually turned away from pictorialism to an appreciation of the straight photograph, and in doing so he presented photography with a stripped-down aesthetic that mirrored the aesthetics of Matisse and Picasso. Steiglitz's later work, such as the studies of clouds that he called "Equivalents," is an aesthete's version of snapshot art—a hypersophisticated look at what the medium can do in its most fundamental form. The later Steiglitz was a romantic contemplating the ultimate realist art; and this has turned out to be the line along which an aesthetic of photography has developed in this century. Both the Surrealists (who gave Atget high art status) and the Constructivists (who built a photographic style out of the

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straightforward manner of technical photography) were involved in one way or another in a romance of the real.

Within photography, the nineteenth-century conflict between the romantics and the realists lived on long after it had ceased to be an issue in painting. The photographers who think of themselves as artists are involved with the connoisseurship of realities: photography's revelations are sensuous, dandified. The greatest photographer is, I suspect, Walker Evans, because he alone could turn photography into a sustained meditation on the styles of the world, on the varieties of reality. He is Flaubertian: he takes pieces of realist detail and draws them together into a perfectly etched classical whole.

Evans loads his sophistication into his images. *Church Organ, Alabama,* the 1936 Evans photograph included in "Photography Until Now," is many things all at once: a meditation on late-Victorian furniture design; a factual report, in part through the signs posted on the walls, on Sunday school attendance and behavior in the Alabama of the 1930s; and an essay in Cubist aesthetics, in which the platform to the right of the organ sets up a second ground plane, so that the small chair exists in its separate pocket of space. Each of these levels of meaning is something that other photographers have dealt with. But only Evans has the synthetic imagination to see it all at once. In Evans's work the kinds of curiosity that draw us to photography in the first place are put under the magnifying glass, and curiosity becomes revelation. That he has been an icon at MOMA for fifty years is no accident, and is absolutely right.

Szarkowski does not make many bows to the fashionable present. At a time when much of the art that is being shown in SoHo is photo-derived, or includes photographic material, Szarkowski acts as if he rarely ventures below Fifty-Third Street. Though he includes examples of work by Warhol and Rauschenberg, generally he resists the idea that photography is a technological resource to be used as painters see fit. His taste is not, in any event, for photography as some element in a larger, pictorial collage. He wants photography on its own terms, and who can blame him? Cindy Sherman is here: perhaps she strikes Szarkowski as almost old-fashioned, a self-portraitist who dresses up. But the many contemporary artists who use the impersonality of photographic technology as a metaphor for the impersonality of modern life—people like Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince—are not in evidence. I gather that Szarkowski sees their work as a criticism of photography rather than an extension of it. I agree. These artists are denying photography its richness of illusion, its ability to show us the wonders of the world. And Szarkowski has little interest in work that is influenced by television, video, or film. His selections for the latter part of his show have been attacked for old-fogeyism, but it surely takes guts to exclude the downtown Mafia from a major museum show.

In Szarkowski's view photography goes on, and keeps going back to the world. He is right to stress photography's capacity to bring us back to the world. But his loyalty to the medium also suggests its limits. Over the course of the history of photography the techniques change; and photographs that have been done at different periods, taken together, tell us that the world has changed. But the photographer is always left looking out at a world that is beyond his capacity to change.

In 1938 Lincoln Kirstein observed (in the introduction to Walker Evans's *American Photographs*, published by MOMA) that all the early photographic masters wanted to do "was to render the object, face, group, house, or battlefield airlessly clear in the isolation of its accidental circumstances, . . . to create out of a fragmentary moment its own permanence." In this sense, photography is rather far from what we think of as art, rather far from the complex metaphor that is created through the actions of a powerful imagination. But when we look at photographs we can see that the transformation of a moment into something permanent does have to do with a process of selection—and so something like art comes into it.

At 150, photography is still casting its mechanical eye on a world we would like to know better. "Photography Until Now" is about the camera's love affair with the world. But Szarkowski wants it to be about a great deal more: he wants us to confront the self-consciousness, the artfulness, of the photographer. I do not believe that the times are especially conducive to serene contemplation of the relations between art and technology, the imagination and the machine. Szarkowski, a good old modernist in the good old MOMA tradition, wants us to think of photography as art's doppelgänger: the technological image-maker that is always there in the consciousness of the modern artist as his mechanical competitor.

From the days of the Surrealists and the Constructivists until not very long ago, it was fun to feel the tug of that competitor—and, sometimes, to allow oneself to be seduced. But by now the technological imagination, often in the form of the photographic imagination, has come to dominate art. Sherman, Levine, Prince, Kruger, Louise Lawler, Doug and Mike Starn: they and countless others are using photographic technology to dehumanize art, to distance us from experience: they tell us that we are all reproducible, that we live in a world of reproductions. Photography is no longer a doppelgänger that we can contemplate serenely; instead we feel that we must keep it at bay. This could be why the past decade—when definitions of art have all gone to hell and many artists have been telling us that technology is rendering art obsolete—hasn't been the happiest period to think about the relation of photography and art, or to think about photography at all.

Szarkowski mixes the nostalgia that is at the heart of the photographic enterprise with our nostalgia for our own long-lost love affairs with the medium. Once upon a time, we looked on photog-

Shadow on Stone

On the granite steps
the shadow of the person sitting there
that morning in Hiroshima.

And on the day I left Cuba
my friends died.
Raúl died in his blue sailboat.
Alvaro died
as he brought his violin to his chin
and began to read the first notes
on the yellowed page.
Elvira died
knocking at the door of a safe house.
Evelio died dancing without me.

Sometimes
after twenty-five years:
a voice on the telephone,
or a letter under the door,
or a tape of Alvaro
playing Brahms.
The applause goes through me
like a gunshot.

In a secret place
in this house, in the dark,
shadow and shadow and shadow,
I gather us together
into the first small seed.

Olga Karman Mendell

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raphy as a vacation from painting. It's no fault of Szarkowski's that our hearts are a little hardened to the world according to photography. The lenses may be polished to perfection, the photosensitive papers may be capable of picking up every nuance of light, but the magic of times past—ours and the medium's—is unrecoverable, at least for now.

JED PERL is the author of *Paris Without End: On French Art Since World War I* (North Point).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

a moment when the Ayatollah's legions were seemingly poised for a decisive military breakthrough. Three years later, the lesser and greater evils have switched places, and so has our advice on tactics. Check out the views of the others you quoted, though, and you'll find nearly all of them humming the same ol' tune, "Saddam Enchanted Evening."

DANIEL PIPES
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TV guide

To the editors:

I was disappointed by your cheap editorial shot (Notebook, May 21) at my concern about the safety of certain television sets.

When the Associated Press reported the recall of hundreds of thousands of Japanese color television sets in Japan because of fire hazards, I felt obligated, as chairman of the House subcommittee responsible for the Consumer Product Safety Commission, to bring this issue to the commission's attention. The country of origin is not the issue—the safety of a consumer product is. Although it is true that imported products must meet the same CPSC safety standards as domestic ones, you failed to mention that television sets sold here are governed by a *voluntary* industry standard, relying primarily on the goodwill of the foreign manufacturer.

Unlike TNR, the CPSC did not think my concern about television safety was unfounded and is now investigating the matter. That is exactly the response the public expects.

More ominously, the CPSC's vice chairman observed in a recent speech that Japanese TV manufacturers never notified the CPSC of the problem even though these same companies market TVs in the United States.

DOUG WALGREN
Washington, D.C.

The writer is a U.S. representative from Pennsylvania.

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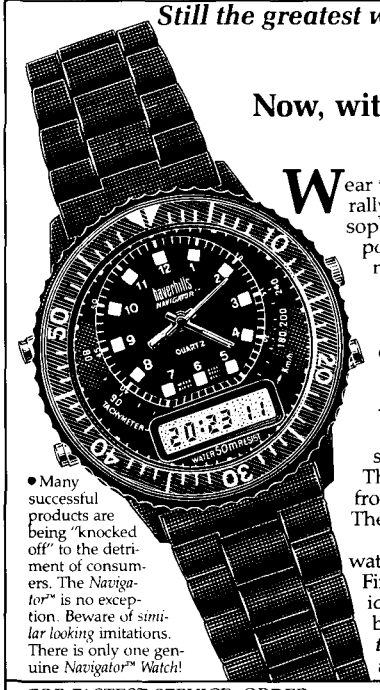

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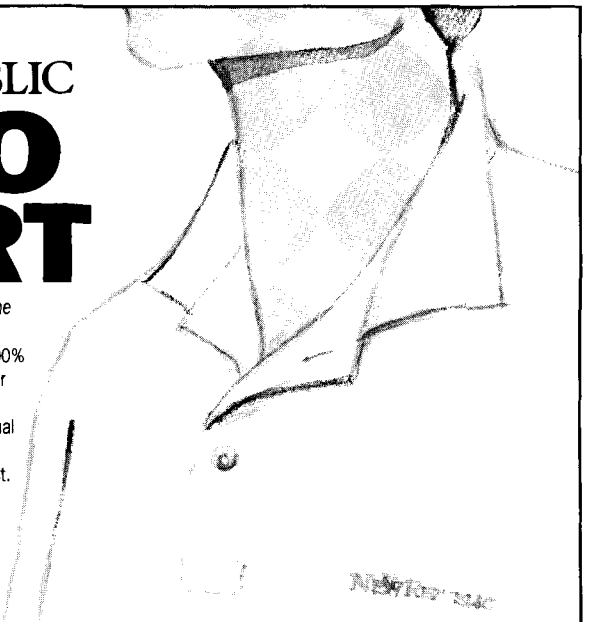

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LAS VEGAS DIARIST

Barnum & Bartlett's

WHEN THE AMERICAN BOOKsellers Association decided to hold its annual convention in Las Vegas this June, it caused a predictable stir. Send book people to that capital of barbarity? The truth is, of course, that the cultural incongruity isn't as extreme as some publishers and booksellers may like to think. High-stakes gambling, extravagant hype, crass packaging, and exploitative pandering are not exactly foreign to the book trade these days. In fact, far from debasing the image of the industry, the Vegas setting may have been the best boost it has gotten in a while. Every ABA convention I've ever attended has been a dizzying four-day reminder of how indiscriminately vast publishing has become, how vacuously commercial our literary culture can be. The scene on the crowded convention hall floor is always garish and noisy. The mood I've come to expect is jittery acquisitiveness: hordes of people streaming past thousands of publishers' booths, greedily stuffing promotional freebies into their tote bags. The tone is predictably philistine (a few years ago the star author was Mr. T). This year the ABA commotion was exactly the same (the current Mr. T: Donald Trump), and yet it felt completely different. Against the backdrop of Las Vegas—surpassingly garish, ten times brighter, noisier, more dizzying, and unbeatably tasteless—the convention was an oasis of calm and civilization.

IN LAS VEGAS ALL THE CABBIES sound like crooners, and the limousine drivers everywhere are even more mellifluous. It's easy to imagine a mike at their lips as they boast about the wonders of the town. (The Excalibur, the newest and biggest hotel, about to open, inspired a paean: it's a Disney-style medieval castle, complete with a "dungeon" fun zone downstairs and a jousting pit.) Nestled in the white stretch hotel limo that picked me up at the airport, I could barely see the driver up front, but his voice seemed to purr from the plush walls around me: "You'll need your sunglasses when you visit the Strip." Before long, however, the Vegas drivers were a little irritated with the most recent invasion of conventioneers: the ABA crowd was full of lousy tippers—by Las Vegas standards, anyway. (Fodor's survival guide to "the neon jungle of Vegas," specially produced for the ABA, let us down. An earnest Baedeker, it kindly translated some local linguistic quirks, like "Toke. Short for token, or token of your esteem, a toke is a tip, and many of the folks you encounter will be expecting one." But it was no help on the indelicate question of how big a toke.) And the cabbies were probably sick of being pumped for their life stories by pale tourists wearing "I LOVE TO READ" buttons, clearly at a loss about how to soak up local color. Trading taxi lore was a favorite sport among the convention set, since great gambling stories were rare and nobody I knew made it to two titillating seminars listed in the calendar of events: "Peek into a Showgirl's Life: Time—1 Hour—Behind the scenes of a Las Vegas Showgirl as unique stories are revealed" and "World Famous Madame: Time—1 Hour—Learn about the world's oldest profession; interesting, humorous and not offensive." The favorite story making the ABA rounds was about the cabbie who was deep into Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics*, and who couldn't stop raving about the Quality Paperback Book Club.

THOUGH I TOO MISSED THE showgirl seminar, I did see two of Vegas's most acclaimed showboys, Siegfried & Roy, "master illusionists." As more than one cab driver told me, the pair have just signed a $55.5 million contract at the new Mirage Hotel (which boasts a fifty-foot waterfall and an exploding volcano out front). The glossy program booklet for the show looked like a special ABA edition. It featured lots of photos of Siegfried & Roy (blow-dried, skin-tucked, with glistening eyes and glistening clothes—that distinctive polyester-decadent look of Vegas) accompanied by their exotic co-stars, a group of white tigers—and by a literary quotation per page. "Round about what is, lies a whole mysterious world of what might be . . . " —Longfellow; "The world after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, magical and more, to whosoever will think of it." —Carlyle. Etc. Welcome to Barnum & Bartlett's.

I CONFESS I WAS TEMPTED TO earn a place in the Guinness World of Records Museum down the street as the first person ever to walk out of Siegfried & Roy, the extravaganza that always sells out, the show without which no trip to Vegas is complete. Time—2 Endless Hours (and only two drinks per ticket). "Surprise is the greatest gift which life can grant us," says Pasternak on page three of the program, but with Siegfried & Roy's elaborate apparatus of lights, scrims, wires, smoke, and fire, and a huge production staff to operate it all, who couldn't levitate, or make a tiger disappear? "It is not enough to conquer; one must know how to seduce," says Voltaire on the next page, and yet Siegfried & Roy, for all their dimpled smiles, have a strangely chilling style. Sticking pretty ladies in boxes and then cutting them in half, twisting their heads 360 degrees, etc. are standard magic routines; still, when these two German-accented, black-booted, strutting men performed them, the mysterious feats looked more like misogynist stunts to me. But it was the white tigers I was really worried about. Siegfried & Roy pose as defenders of the endangered species: they breed the rare tigers, and urge the audience to join in protecting the animals' natural habitats. ("Come forth into the light of things, let Nature be your teacher," says Wordsworth on page seven.) And yet Siegfried & Roy haul the tigers out to confront hot lights, deafening music, and applauding crowds every day, and then send them home to a big aquarium in the Mirage Hotel lobby. It would be hard to imagine a more unnatural habitat in the world.

FROM THAT EXHIBITION OF hocus-pocus ("In all of us there is an illusive melody which when heard and followed leads to the fulfillment of our fondest dreams" —Siegfried & Roy), it was only a short step to the New Age authors' breakfast the next morning. At first the gathering looked like another case of cultural incongruity—otherworldly devotees surrounded by jangling slot machines. But the deeper harmony between the setting and the morning event was soon apparent. Las Vegas caters to materialist urges and the New Age movement to spiritual inclinations, but what they both really specialize in are illusions. A belief in the power of mind over matter is the key to New Age teachings, and to casino operations. What's most surprising, from my brief exposure to both, is that Las Vegas is, if anything, more mystical about it all. At the New Age breakfast I heard about the brain and its neuropeptides, and about quantum mechanics, from Dr. Deepak Chopra. "We're so pleased to have an M.D. give authority to what we far-out people have been saying for a long time," the moderator said. But everywhere else I turned in Las Vegas, there was no sign of insecurity about the claims of the imagination. All the preposterous fakery was proof of a profound faith in fantasy.

ANN HULBERT

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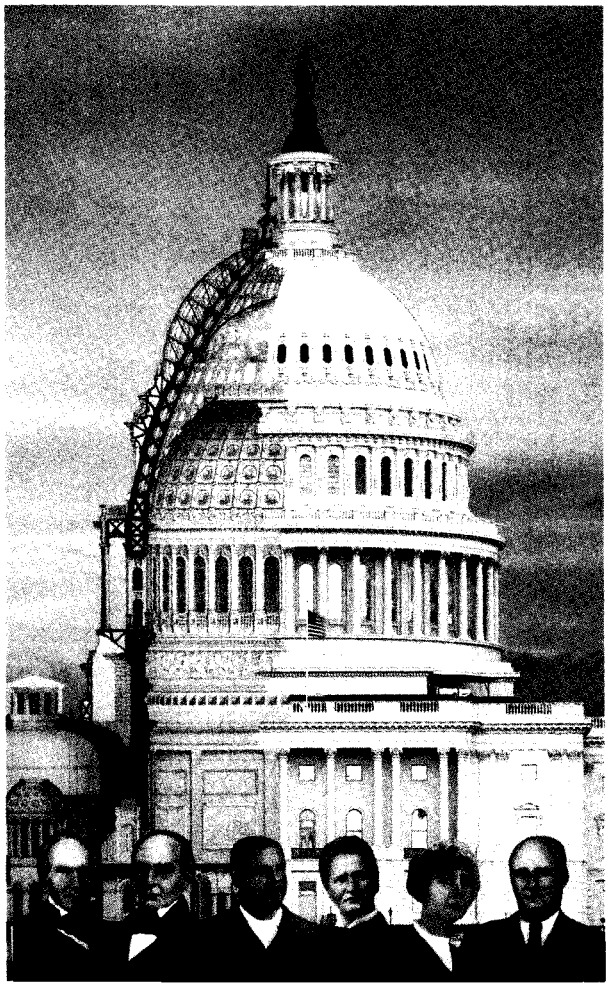

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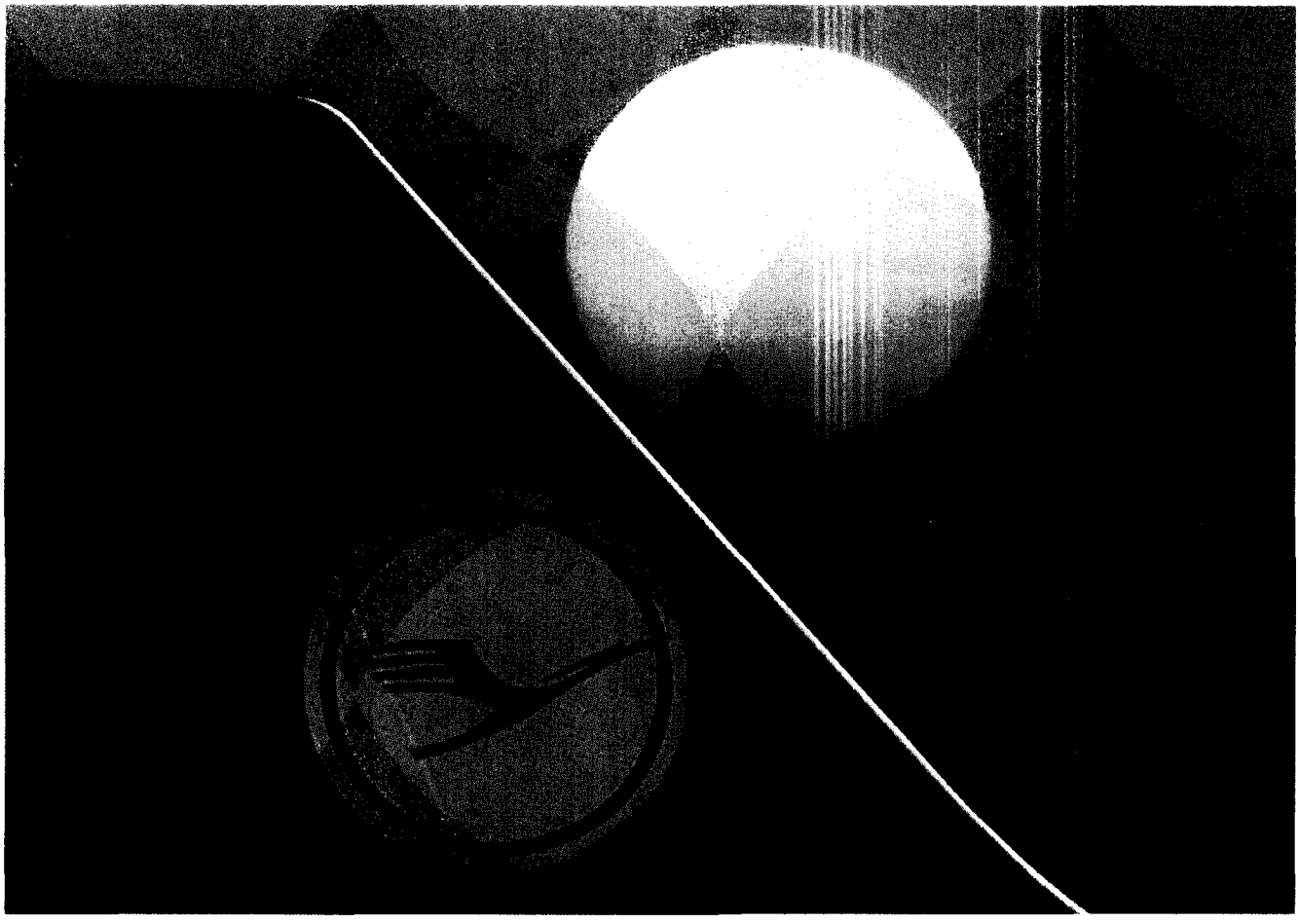

Remember the Iron Curtain? Not so long ago, Eastern Europe seemed remote and uninviting to travellers from the West.

Today, of course, the climate has improved dramatically. And while many western airlines are just now beginning to open up routes to the East, to Lufthansa, Eastern Europe is already familiar ground.

In fact, no other airline flies to more countries in Eastern Europe than Lufthansa.You will even find Lufthansa offices throughout Eastern Europe, staffed by people who have the experience to help you with local travel arrangements, hotels, rental cars and more.

As western travellers rediscover Eastern Europe, no wonder so many take the airline that never left.

People expect the world of us.

Lufthansa

Lufthansa is a participant in the mileage programs of United, Delta, USAir and Continental/Eastern. See your Travel Agent for details.

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